# GRASVILLE ABBEY:

## A ROMANCE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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" See yonder hallow'd fane! the pious work
" Of names once fam'd, now dubious or forgot,
" And buried 'midst the wreck of things which were."

THE GRAVE.

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# GRASVILLE ABBEY.

## CHAP. I.

AGNES was aſtoniſhed, when ſhe awoke in the morning, to perceive Matilda was not undreſſed, and immediately inquired the cauſe: the latter, who had already determined on an anſwer, told her, that, having ſat up longer than uſual to finiſh a book, ſhe fell aſleep for the night. Agnes doubted not her veracity, and chearfully went to prepare breakfaſt.

Matilda was perplexed to know in what manner to act, concerning the light in the weſt tower. The ſtrange circumſtances which ſeemed to encompaſs this abbey with a miſt of doubtful horror, every day became more uncomfortable and diſagreeable. It was true, the good ſenſe and inſtructions of her mother had brought her up to deſpiſe ſuperſtition, and laugh at the folly of thoſe who liſtened to uncommon reports. But the occurrences ſhe had lately been witneſs to, gave her ſtrong reaſons to believe in ſupernatural exiſtence. The craſh and groans in the apartment, ſhe had herſelf heard diſtinctly, and

was certain both her brother and Leonard muſt have ſeen ſomething more than common, to have uttered ſuch exclamations of ſurpriſe and horror. Her aunt's manuſcript gave a particular account of a light being ſeen in the weſt tower, not only by her father and his ſervant, but by more than one of the villagers. An interval from that time had now paſſed, of near one-and-twenty years; yet ſhe had again ſeen a light in the ſame building, which had moſt probably never been inhabited even when the late count Maſerini reſided in the abbey. Such ſtrange and myſterious events ſtaggered all the fortitude ſhe had derived from the leſſons of her parent, and both alarmed and terrified her. She reſolved, however, to keep the knowledge of the light to herſelf for the preſent, and watch again at the ſame hour, when ſhe might poſſibly make ſome further diſcovery.

With theſe reſolutions ſhe deſcended to the parlour. Her brother was already up, and the breakfaſt waited for her. In about two hours, they were ready to walk to the hermit, and left the abbey accordingly. Father Peter received them at the entrance of his cell, and conducted them to the inner part, where he begged they would be ſeated. They diſcourſed on ſeveral ſubjects; Father Peter ſhowed himſelf to be a man of great underſtanding and quick imagination: theſe gifts of nature ſeemed alſo to have been cheriſhed by an excellent education.

His

His manners were elegant and poliſhed, while his whole deportment commanded reſpect and admiration. There was, however, a ſettled gloom which overſpread his countenance, that ſhowed he had a heavy ſorrow at heart, which he was unable to overcome. Alfred, at the latter part of their viſit, mentioned the terror which people in general ſuffered concerning Graſville Abbey.

"'Tis a misfortune from birth, my ſon," replied the hermit, "which is greatly increaſed by the errors of education."

"Yet ſurely, ſuch terrors are natural," ſaid Matilda: "and in every ſituation, we ſhould be ſubject to their influence."

"True!" anſwered Father Peter: "yet they are greatly encouraged by tales of horror, and terrific recitals, which curioſity prompts us to liſten to, and which ſo far win on our fancy, as to make us anxious after ſuch entertainment."

"Your obſervations, father, are juſt," ſaid Alfred: yet there may, ſometimes, circumſtances happen to us of a ſtrange nature, that to all human probability would confirm the appearance of ſupernatural beings."

Here he looked at Leonard, whoſe countenance changed, while he ſeemed to ſhudder at the ideas his maſter's words had occaſioned. None, except Matilda, obſerved it; but ſhe had lately watched every look of both her brother

and Leonard.——Father Peter appeared alſo diſturbed: he heſitated ſome time before he anſwered; at length, however, he gave a ſhort reply, and the converſation took another turn.

After a little time, they took their leave, and again walked to the abbey. Alfred, when dinner was finiſhed, had a conference of ſome time with Leonard; and the latter immediately after walked out. Matilda, with ſurpriſe, aſked where he was gone; Alfred anſwered her with ſome confuſion, that he had ſent him to try if he could, by any ſtratagem, find if there were letters directed to him at the poſt-houſe. This ſhe knew to be entirely evaſive; but ſhe ſaid no more; and her brother ſoon after retired to his chamber.

Agnes, the moment he was gone, began talking, as uſual, of the room that was next to that they were now in, and declared ſhe expected every inſtant ſome hobgoblin would ſtart through the large heavy folding doors before them. Matilda aſked if ſhe knew whether her brother or Leonard had examined the apartment.

"Oh yes, mademoiſelle, the other morning before you was up."

"And, pray, did they ſee any thing particular?"

"Nothing then," anſwered Agnes: "but they did that dreadful night: for you muſt know I had the curioſity to liſten to their diſcourſe while they were ſearching the place; and though they ſpoke very low, I could juſt make

make out, mademoiſelle, they had ſeen a ghoſt."

"I am determined to have a view of this room," ſaid Matilda, walking to that end of the parlour.

"Oh! for heaven's ſake, mademoiſelle, do not enter for the world."

"Ridiculous!" replied Matilda, and immediately puſhed againſt the doors with all her ſtrength, when they immediately flew open.

The apartment was ſpacious, and one of thoſe they had examined at their firſt coming to the abbey. The furniture was in better order than moſt of the others: but the ſhutters being cloſed, the only light came from an opening at the top. She walked entirely round, and could perceive no alteration whatever. Agnes ſtood at the door, and at intervals attempted to peep in, but directly ſhrunk back, and retired. Matilda, having ſatisfied herſelf, cloſed the doors, while Agnes impatiently inquired if ſhe had ſeen any thing extraordinary. Matilda ſmiled at the earneſtneſs with which ſhe aſked the queſtion, and told her ſhe had nothing to fear. Agnes, however, was by no means diveſted of her terrors; and after the ſtrange occurrences that had already happened, and thoſe which followed, it is not to be wondered at that they greatly increaſed.

In about two hours, Alfred deſcended to the parlour, and ſhortly after Leonard returned: he brought ſome articles with him; but they were carried to the chambers above, and Matilda

tilda had no opportunity of knowing what they were. Supper-time arrived; when both Leonard and his maſter ſeemed, in ſome meaſure, to have regained their uſual ſpirits: yet Alfred was impatient to retire to reſt; at an early hour they therefore parted for the night. Matilda took up a book: Agnes, after being undreſſed, wiſhed her good repoſe, and was preſently in a profound ſleep.

Matilda now ſeated herſelf in the window, impatiently waiting the hour of midnight, yet dreading a repetition of the circumſtance ſhe had already ſeen. Her brother and Leonard, ſhe could hear, continued in cloſe diſcourſe for ſome time; the purport of it, however, it was impoſſible for her to make out, as they ſpoke in a low tone of voice. At length the expected time arrived, and ſhe kept watching with a palpitating heart the caſement in the weſt tower.

The night was extremely gloomy; the moon at intervals gave a light; but heavy clouds continued frequently to eclipſe it, and thunder rolled at a diſtance, while flaſhes of ſtrong lightning darted from an illumined part of the heavens, which ſeemed to form a mountain of fire. Matilda ſtill kept her eye fixed on the tower; but no light appeared, except that from above, which fell on its grey decayed walls, o'ergrown with ivy, and ſlowly tumbling to the ground through the ravages of time.

She

She was juſt going to quit her ſituation, when ſhe thought ſhe perceived ſomething move in the court below. A few minutes before, ſhe had heard, as ſhe ſuppoſed, her brother's chamber-door open ſoftly, and a ſtep cautiouſly deſcend the ſtair-caſe to the hall. At the time, ſhe conceived it to be only fancy; but her ideas were now different. A ſtrong flaſh of lightning gave her an opportunity to diſcover a figure walk ſlowly with a dark lantern acroſs the court towards the outer gates. It was cloſely wrapped up; but by the height it ſeemed like Leonard.

He now diſappeared among ſome trees, but ſhe ſtill ſaw the light through the foliage. Matilda, more and more agitated, remained at the window. In about five minutes, the light again moved towards the abbey; and the moon at that moment ſuddenly appearing from a heavy cloud, ſhe could plainly perceive two men follow the perſon who held the lantern. Both, by their dreſs, ſeemed Italians: but their cloaks were entirely faſtened round them, and their hats flapped over their faces ſo as to conceal the countenance.

Aſtoniſhed at ſuch an unexpected ſight, and ready to ſink with terror, ſhe knew not in what manner to act. Leonard might be a villain! She checked herſelf at ſo uncharitable a ſuppoſition: yet, why ſhould he leave his bed at ſuch an hour, and admit two ſtrangers into the abbey,

where

where her brother had, in all probability, preſerved his life through the ſecrecy of his habitation.

This unaccountable adventure had ſo ſtrange and dreadful an appearance, that ſhe reſolved to appriſe him of the viſitors, as ſhe had every reaſon to believe he was aſleep when Leonard left the chamber: at the moment, however, ſhe was going to execute this reſolution, ſhe heard the latter enter, and ſoftly accoſt Alfred in a low voice, ſaying, "They are come, ſir;" and immediately they both deſcended, as ſhe ſuppoſed, to the parlour.

The idea of the light in the weſt tower now vaniſhed from her mind, and ſhe was entirely taken up with the occurence that had juſt paſt.

It was plain to her that Alfred had expected theſe men, as he could not be even undreſſed by his directly leaving the room when Leonard came up with the information of their arrival: yet what buſineſs he could have with them, was an entire myſtery: and the moſt tormenting ſuſpicion, which ſhe bluſhed to encourage, at different intervals agitated her mind. She reſolved, at all events, to watch their departure, which did not happen for nearly an hour and a half; when Leonard, with his lantern, again conducted them acroſs the court. Soon after Alfred and himſelf entered their chamber, and, as ſhe ſuppoſed, retired to reſt.——Matilda, haraſſed

raſſed out and perplexed with the ſcene ſhe had been witneſs to, undreſſed herſelf, and lay down on a ſleepleſs pillow.

The conduct of her brother was ſo equivocal and ſecret, that ſhe was greatly at a loſs to aſſign even one ſingle reaſon for his late behaviour, ſince that period when Leonard returned from his firſt journey to the market, and deſired to ſpeak with him alone. The intelligence he received that day was certainly the cauſe of his ſtrange manner of conduct ſince, let it be of what nature it would. Though ſhe had laughed at Agnes's fears concerning the apartment next the parlour, yet ſomething had been ſeen to cauſe the alarm and terror: for the countenances both of Leonard and his maſter, which ſhe even then took notice of, confirmed her they had been greatly ſhocked.

The light in the weſt tower had not appeared again as ſhe expected; and ſhe might have been rather doubtful of being deceived by the lightning, had ſhe not ſeen an arm move within it at the ſame time. At length, wearied with reflection, ſhe ſtrove to compoſe herſelf to reſt, and fell into a diſturbed ſlumber.

They aſſembled to breakfaſt at a very late hour the next day, and all (except Agnes) by no means refreſhed by the little reſt they had enjoyed. They deferred viſiting the hermit till the afternoon. Matilda took particular notice of

her brother, but could perceive no alteration in his manner from the day before.

Having walked to Father Peter's cave, he received them at the entrance with his uſual cordiality, and ſet before them ſome fruits for refreſhment.

"I had them," ſaid the old man, "from a peaſant in the village, whom I often viſit, and have known for many years, but never could perſuade him to come near my habitation: for being once frightened at paſſing Graſville Abbey, he has never dared to venture near it ſince, not even in the day-time!"

All laughed at the man's ſimplicity, as they called it, yet were all conſcious they were a prey to ſimilar fears.

"Indeed, father," ſaid Alfred, "I have heard ſo much talk of this abbey, that I intended to enter it myſelf, and ſatisfy that curioſity which has been raiſed by the different ſtories I have heard concerning it."

The hermit's countenance changed at Alfred's words; and he in vain ſtrove to conceal that agitation which worked in his heart.

"By no means fulfil ſuch a reſolution, my ſon: the attempt may be dangerous.——I am an old man and know more of that abbey than you do.——You muſt promiſe that you will give up all idea of it."

Alfred fixed his eyes on father Peter;—Leonard looked chagrined; Matilda liſtened with

with attention, and Agnes trembled with emotion.

"Excuſe me," ſaid Alfred, who was the firſt that broke ſilence: "but you forget yourſelf, father, and in a great degree contradict the uſual tenor of your diſcourſe."

The hermit raiſed his eyes, and was offended at the remark.

"I did but warn you, ſignor," anſwered he: "but follow your own inclination; do not, however, accuſe me of diſſimulation.

Alfred felt the rebuke, and made an apology.

Soon after, they took their leave, and returned to the abbey.

Father Peter's behaviour appeared now more ſtrange than ever: and Alfred determined not yet to truſt him with the hiſtory of his affairs. They took an early ſupper, and retired ſoon after.

CHAP.

## CHAP. II.

### TERRIFIC SENSATIONS.

*" Avaunt! and quit my ſight! let the earth hide thee!*
*Thy bones are marrowleſs; thy blood is cold;*
*Thou haſt no ſpeculation in thoſe eyes*
*Which thou doſt glare with!*

MACBETH.

IF, at the beginning of life, mankind in general were to be made acquainted with the misfortunes they muſt ſuffer in a ſeries of years, the greater number would welcome death, and willingly eſcape miſeries they would ſuppoſe themſelves unable to ſupport. But when the trials we are ſubject to, appear one by one, and we, in regular gradation, get the better of each of them, the laſt diſtreſs gives us fortitude to go through the ſucceeding one; and by that fortitude we ſtruggle through the world, and thus arrive at a ſtate of calm ſerenity, in the decline of exiſtence.

Matilda had ſuffered too much for want of reſt the two latter nights, to have any idea of again watching the weſt tower, or the unknown viſitors

viſitors to the abbey; ſhe therefore immediately undreſſed, and was preſently in a profound ſleep.

The next morning ſhe was much refreſhed, and, entering the parlour, ſhe once more, according to her wiſhes found Leonard alone. She directly opened the ſubject of her former diſcourſe, and now requeſted him to give that account which was ſo critically interrupted by her brother.

Leonard ſeemed prepared, and anſwered with firmneſs, "that he hoped ſhe would not be offended,—but he could not."

"Cannot, Leonard!" exclaimed Matilda.

"No, mademoiſelle, indeed I cannot; my maſter ſuſpected the queſtion when we were laſt together, and gave me the moſt poſitive orders to be ſilent with reſpect to every thing relative to that night."

Matilda, though poſſeſſed of the niceſt ſenſibility, and fineſt feelings, yet had a warmth in her temper ſomething ſimilar to her brother; and though not quite ſo quick to imagine an affront, ſhe was equally ſpirited in reſenting an inſult to her pride.——Leonard had hardly ever ſeen her ſo hurt; he looked diſtreſſed, yet appeared in every reſpect firm and reſolved to keep his word. Matilda continued ſome moments in a haughty ſilence; but at length thus addreſſed him:

"The

"The cauſe of the ſlighting behaviour I have received ſince our reſidence here, I am at a loſs to divine, Leonard; and heaven only knows how I have deſerved it. Every queſtion I have aſked, though probably of no leſs importance to me than to my brother, has been anſwered with equivocation and reſerve; while the ſtrange behaviour of Alfred, and the melancholy continually fixed on your countenance, gives every reaſon for ſuſpicion and apprehenſion.

"Theſe circumſtances, added to the ſeveral occurrences that I myſelf have lately been witneſs to in this deſolate abbey, make it to me a moſt diſguſting and unpleaſant abode. In ſhort, though I have been taught to deſpiſe ſuperſtition, yet I have every reaſon to believe all is not right in the gloomy chambers of the weſt tower; while the words which I plainly heard you repeat on entering yonder room, confirm to me that you ſaw ſomething of a dreadful nature: and," continued Matilda in a voice of diſpleaſure, yet both firm and determined, "theſe reaſons added together have made me reſolve to quit this place immediately and for ever."

Had a thunderbolt at that moment fallen at Leonard's feet, he could not have ſtarted with more ſurpriſe and horror.

"Leave the abbey, mademoiſelle! leave the abbey!—good heavens! you will not ſurely leave us?"

"Before

"Before two more days are paſt, you may depend on it, Leonard; during which time I ſhall be able to conſider what method will be the moſt ſecret for my departure, on my brother's account; for unleſs I am actually detained a priſoner here, I intend going to France, and becoming a nun in the convent of N*****, where my mother and aunt were both placed in the beginning of life."

"The Holy Lady protect us!" exclaimed Leonard. "Do not encourage theſe ideas: they will drive my poor maſter diſtracted."

"You muſt impart the intelligence to him, and requeſt he will contrive ſome method for my conveyance."

Leonard was again going to reply: But Agnes brought in the breakfaſt, and Alfred preſently entered. Directly after breakfaſt was over, Leonard requeſted to ſpeak with his maſter; and Matilda had no doubt concerning the ſubject of this conference.

When Agnes and Matilda were alone, the latter mentioned her reſolution of leaving the abbey.

Agnes's ſurpriſe was not leſs than Leonard's, but of a very different kind; joy appeared in her countenance, and ſhe declared, of all things in the world, it was what ſhe moſt wiſhed for—"I can then ſtill attend you, mademoiſelle, and yet leave this dreadful place."

"But

" But will your wiſhes lead you to attend me to the place where I intend going ?"

" Any where, mademoiſelle !" exclaimed Agnes, her eyes beaming with love and gratitude— " even to the end of the world, with pleaſure."

Matilda ſhed tears ;—ſhe was greatly affected with the honeſt ſimplicity and good heart of this girl.

" But I am going to the convent of N*****, in France, Agnes, and intend poſitively to take the veil immediately."

Agnes turned pale.

" To the convent of N*****, mademoiſelle ! and take the veil ! but I will follow you there too."

Here ſhe burſt into a flood of tears : for in that caſe all hopes of a union with Oliver, whom ſhe ſtill loved, muſt have ended.

Matilda gueſſed her thoughts, and pitied her ſituation. She knew not how to proceed :— the little money which they had brought over from England, and which, as was before related, was the laſt Alfred had to receive of his fortune, being now nearly half expended : and on this account it was that ſhe generouſly determined (ſhould it be poſſible to be done, without diſcovering her brother) to make over to him all that ſhe was poſſeſſed of by her mother's death ; as ſhe would, after once becoming a member of the holy community, be no more in want of money to ſupport her. At all events, however,

ſhe

ſhe reſolved, if it was not agreeable for Agnes to retire with her to the convent, to make her a handſome preſent, and, if in her power, ſee her comfortably ſettled. This propoſal ſhe acquainted her with; but to part with Matilda, was nearly as diſtreſſing to the poor girl as to loſe Oliver for ever; yet ſhe muſt conſent to one or the other. In vain ſhe ſtrove to perſuade Matilda, by every argument ſhe could think of, to give up the idea of going to a convent, and live retired in France: and little did ſhe ſuppoſe, while they were repelled with a ſteady fortitude, that Matilda had the ſame tie as herſelf to make a retreat from the world miſerable; yet, with the moſt elevated and noble ſentiments, ſhe ſacrificed her own happineſs for the ſake of a brother.

Agnes ſtill wavered, ſighed, and wept, but was unable to come to any reſolution.

After ſome time Alfred and Leonard entered the parlour: both appeared diſtreſſed, and the latter requeſted to ſpeak with his ſiſter, alone. They retired to a chamber above. He informed her, Leonard had been telling him of her intention to quit the abbey, and retire to the convent of N*****.

Matilda anſwered that the information was right, and that ſuch was poſitively her determination.

He entreated her not to take ſo raſh a ſtep, but well to conſider a monaſtic life, before ſhe entered into it.

That,

That, she said, she had already done; for the many adversities she had gone through since her mother's death, had sickened her of the world, and——

"Hold, Matilda!" exclaimed Alfred! "is there not one person in this world which you are so disgusted with, whom you may think of with a sigh of tenderness, and that sigh bring a wish that you had never been immured within the walls of a convent?"

Matilda felt herself hurt at the question.

"Let my ideas or remembrances be whatever they may, my resolution is fixed; nor can my situation be worse than that I am now involved in."

"Do you accuse me of unkindness, Matilda?"

"In some respects I do.——But this discourse is ridiculous; let us consider in what manner I shall escape without injuring you."

"Surely you do not actually intend leaving us?"

"After what I have said, do you suppose I jest?"

"You must not, cannot go," he exclaimed, raising his voice.

"And pray, sir," answered Matilda, her pride piqued—"by what right will you detain me?"

He seemed chagrined.

"Indeed,

" Indeed, Matilda, you muſt think better of this affair.——Give up the idea, and conſider it as romantic."

" Without I am detained by force," anſwered Matilda with firmneſs, " I am determined to leave this abbey before——"

" Hold," ſaid Alfred, " and inform me for what reaſon you have thus ſuddenly taken ſo ſtrange a reſolution."

" For various reaſons, all of which combined together ſhow that it is poſitively neceſſary for my own happineſs. Repreſent to yourſelf my ſituation,——confined within the walls of this awful, gloomy, and melancholy abode, the external part of which, added to the ſtories that have been circulated concerning it, terrify people even from the place where it ſtands; while the myſterious and ſtrange circumſtances that have happened ſince our reſidence in it, confirm in a great meaſure thoſe reports;—yourſelf and Leonard involved in a deep melancholy, the cauſe of which you both refuſe to impart, though by your behaviour you give encouragement to the moſt horrid and diſmal ſuppoſitions.—The innocent Agnes continually terrifies herſelf and me by thoſe fears which are certainly cauſed by the moſt powerful reaſons, and which prey the more on my ſpirits, by my being obliged to ſupport hers, and to talk lightly of thoſe ideas I feel

myſelf

myſelf with equal terror. But I will confeſs my intention was haſtened by Leonard's refuſal to give that information I required relative to your entrance into that room next the parlour on the dreadful night of the ſtorm.——When I firſt requeſted the explanation, we were interrupted by you; and he now tells me, that, ſuſpecting the purport of our diſcourſe, you forbid him to anſwer the queſtion. Neither would you give give any ſatisfactory reply during our converſation on the terrace, but left me to think the worſt in a ſtate of uncertainty. In ſhort, there is an arbitrary principle reigns through the whole tenor of your conduct, which I am reſolved no longer to put up with."

Here her countenance glowed with anger and contempt:——ſhe was going to leave the chamber, when Alfred ſtopped her.

"Hear me in ſome meaſure vindicate myſelf," exclaimed he, "though I cannot at preſent ſatisfy your curioſity.—In the firſt place, you complain of your reſidence in this abbey; but conſider for a moment, Matilda, and you will find that it was my exertion in the preſervation of your honour, and the puniſhment I gave the villain who dared to inſult you, that obliged me to fly hither, and ignobly conceal myſelf from purſuit, while double infamy was poured upon my name, and by helliſh contrivance I was proved a deſerter unknown to myſelf.—You well know,

when

when at Dover, I had reſolved to give up my perſon to my country, and ſtand my trial for the crime; but Mr. Milverne's letter altered this reſolution, when he informed me that the count was not dead, but that arbitrary power would be certain to overcome juſtice in any caſe in which the wretch D'Ollifont was concerned. Setting this argument aſide, I confeſs you have had ſome cauſe for reſentment for the concealment of what I know it would be improper to communicate; and I beg you to remember, however difficult it may appear to account for my actions, I ever have your happineſs in view.—Only make me one promiſe, that you will remain a fortnight longer; and then, if a part of my conduct is not explained, I ſwear I will adopt ſome method for your departure."

"This I agree to," anſwered Matilda; "and to ſhow you that I have a juſt ſenſe of the part you took with reſpect to the count, it is my intention, when once I arrive at the convent, to make over the whole of the little property I am poſſeſſed of, entirely to you."

"Alas! Matilda," anſwered Alfred, "that will be of little ſervice; for if ſome one does not appear, to make you alter your reſolution before the ſtated time, I ſhall have far leſs occaſion for it than yourſelf."

He ſighed heavily; Matilda looked aſtoniſhed, and left the chamber.

"Generous

"Generous girl!" he exclaimed, "could I but once ſee thee happy, and forget the object of my love,—life would have no charms to detain me; and the world ſhould immediately know that Alfred Maſerini could laugh at its malice, and make tyranny bluſh at the exertion of its own power."

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

AGNES and Leonard were ſoon made acquainted with the agreement that had paſſed between the brother and the ſiſter; and it gave both of them pleaſure that the time of Matilda's departure was deferred. Agnes thought ſhe might poſſibly, in this interval, bring herſelf to follow ſo bright an example, and renounce the world for ever; and all were rather more chearful than uſual at dinner. Alfred afterwards propoſed a walk to the hermit; but when they arrived at the cave, the place was deſerted; and they therefore ſuppoſed father Peter was gone his round among the villagers. Having returned, Alfred read ſome poetry aloud, which amuſed them till near ſupper-time; and ſoon after a light repaſt, they retired to their reſpective chambers.

Matilda determined to watch again for the ſtrangers, and the light in the weſt tower. She accordingly took up a book, which occaſioned the ſame excuſe as before, to the innocent and unſuſpecting Agnes, who was ſoon in a profound ſleep. The night was ſerene and beautiful: not a breeze of wind diſturbed the ſurrounding

rounding foliage: all was ſilent, tranquil, and ſolitary; while the heavens, covered with ſtars and illumined by a full moon, gave the eye a more clear view of the dark groves of cypreſs, and the heavy ruins of the weſt tower.

Matilda watched with a palpitating heart the upper caſement, till near midnight, when a ſtrong glare of light, as before, appeared: but in leſs than a minute all was again dark.

In a little time after, ſhe heard Leonard creep ſoftly out of his room, deſcend the ſtair-caſe, and croſs the court. In about five minutes he returned, accompanied by two other perſons, whoſe figures ſhe now ſaw more plainly; and ſhe judged them to be the ſame who paid the laſt viſit. Alfred joined them in the parlour.—They did not remain in the abbey ſo long as the former time; but Leonard, as before, conducted them to the outer gates.

Juſt as they got into the middle of the court, the light in the weſt tower again appeared; and it was immediately noticed by one of the ſtrangers, who ſeemed to utter an exclamation of ſurpriſe. Both his companion and Leonard immediately looked up; and all ſeemed ſtruck with the utmoſt aſtoniſhment. The caſement had been illuminated about three minutes, when a figure advanced, and ſtood in the front of the window.—Matilda ſhuddered, and thoſe below ſeemed greatly alarmed.

The

The form looked to be that of a man; but ſhe could not poſſibly make out either its dreſs or countenance. It continued viſible but a very ſhort time, when it appeared to ſink down by degrees, till it was entirely loſt; and the light immediately vaniſhed.

Leonard and the ſtrangers claſped their hands in ſign of wonder; the former attended them to the gates, and then returned to the abbey: but neither he nor Alfred re-entered their chamber, till near half an hour after.

Matilda, fatigued, and terrified with what ſhe had ſeen, retired to her bed, but not to ſleep. Her mind wandered over ſuch ſtrange events; and the more ſhe thought of them, the more ſhe was perplexed. Myſtery ſeemed to follow myſtery, and every ſucceeding one appeared more horrid than the former.

The gloomy look of her chamber encouraged the moſt diſmal ideas; and her eyes, as if by impulſe, were continually fixed on the picture before mentioned, and which Matilda was ſo ſtruck with, the firſt night ſhe ſlept in the room. Directly oppoſite her bed, was placed a pier glaſs of uncommon ſize, and ſurrounded by a heavy gilt frame. This piece of furniture had lately been added to the chamber, it having before ſtood in one of the apartments below. A ſmall lighted taper was near it, and the dim uncertain light which it gave, ſhowed but faintly the reflection of the objects in the glaſs. Matilda, unable to reſt, and tired with the continual ſight of the

painting, turned her eyes towards the glaſs; it ſhowed the bed and the receſs on each ſide: but the back ground of the reflection was nearly dark.——She was perfectly awake, and ſighed at thoſe ideas ſhe was unable to repreſs.

The ſigh was anſwered.

She trembled,—thought it might be Agnes,—but was convinced ſhe was miſtaken.——She heard it again:——ſhe thought it certainly could not be fancy.

It was repeated a third time.

At that moment ſhe perceived a light through the glaſs, and the ſame figure ſhe had before ſeen in the weſt tower, advance, bearing in the ſame manner a lamp.

Matilda ſaw no more: ſhe ſcreamed, and cloſed her eyes.——In about a minute ſhe opened them again; but the appearance had vaniſhed. Agnes, however, awoke, and requeſted to know if ſhe was ill; while her brother knocked at her door, and aſked the ſame queſtion. She anſwered both that ſhe was well, but had been dreaming: and it being a natural ſuppoſition that this might be the reaſon of her terror, no further inquiry was made. Matilda could not be compoſed: and the more ſhe ſtrove to perſuade herſelf it was merely the effects of a diſturbed brain, the more her own ſenſes confirmed the contrary. By her ſight of the figure in the glaſs, it ſeemed to come forward from the left hand ſide of her bed. There was no opening in the room for the admittance of any human being, except by the door

door of the chamber; and that was bolted on the inſide.——She was entirely free from ſleep, nor had heard the leaſt noiſe ſince ſhe had firſt entered the apartment in the beginning of the night.

She determined to inform her brother of this circumſtance, the firſt opportunity on the following morning, as it was of too horrid a nature to be paſſed over in ſilence.——She again ſtrove to reſt, but it was impoſſible; and fearful of even lifting her head above the bed-clothes, ſhe ſuffered the moſt tormenting and terrific ſenſations.

Morning at length broke in upon the room, and the ſun with glowing ſplendour darted through the thick foliage of the trees, till with majeſtic grandeur he roſe above them, and ſeemed to change the face of nature to life and joy.——Matilda hailed the morning with a hymn to that Supreme Deity who cauſed the change, and at whoſe nod the ſame darkneſs and horror could in a moment be returned.—Agnes ſoon roſe. She perceived Matilda was unwell, and begged ſhe would not get up to breakfaſt: but the latter was certain this would be of no ſervice to her, and ſhe accordingly, after ſome little time, joined them in the parlour.—Alfred inquired if ſhe was ill; ſhe faintly anſwered, "No;" but her manner contradicted the reply.—After breakfaſt ſhe requeſted to ſpeak with him, alone.

Poor Agnes had every day more and more cauſe for wonder, and now declared to Leonard ſhe was

afraid Mademoiſelle was going in the ſame way as he and his maſter.

Matilda and Alfred aſcended to the chamber of the former, and ſhe related to him the events of the laſt night.

Her recital of them was ſo clear and perfect, and her manner of delivery ſo ſteady and free from every appearance of a flighty imagination, that, however improbable the tale might ſeem, Alfred was ſtaggered at the anſwers ſhe gave to the arguments by which he attempted to perſuade her to think no more of it, and at laſt became a convert to her opinion: nor is it ſo much to be wondered at that he ſo readily acquieſced in a belief of the fact, ſince he himſelf had once been witneſs to a light in the weſt tower, and ſeen an object which made a great impreſſion on him on entering the room next the parlour, and had heard Leonard, the night before the preſent morning, relate that he had (as alſo thoſe that were with him) ſeen a light and figure in the ſame caſement of the tower.

Theſe circumſtances, with ſome others of a like nature, following each other in due order, were certainly in a great degree ſufficient reaſons for his belief of a fact which he otherwiſe would have laughed at and diſregarded.

After a pauſe of ſilence for a conſiderable time, during which the countenances of both brother and ſiſter were expreſſive of affliction, diſtreſs, and horror,—Alfred declared an intention, which both alarmed and terrified Matilda, but which he

ſeemed

ſeemed obſtinately bent on executing:—it was to watch himſelf for one night in the weſt tower.

"Leonard," ſaid he, "ſhall ſleep in my room as uſual: but by no means acquaint Agnes with this reſolution."

"For heaven's ſake, Alfred," anſwered Matilda, "do not admit ſuch a thought: I would ſooner ſuffer any thing than you ſhould expoſe yourſelf to ſuch a riſk."

Alfred ſmiled.

"Why ſurely, Matilda," ſaid he, "we have nothing to fear from ſupernatural beings."

She ſtill, however, urged and entreated him to think no more of it. But he continued firm to his plan; and it was in vain his ſiſter uſed every perſuaſive argument ſhe could think of, to make him give up ſuch a dreadful determination.

"Who knows," ſaid he, "Matilda, but one night may unravel myſteries that have been concealed for years?——who knows but by the exertion of a little fortitude,——by baniſhing idle fears, and ſhowing ſome degree of ſpirit,——we may defy our enemies,——my conduct may be made clear to the world,——and a ſeries of happy years be a reward for adverſities at the beginning of life?—What would I not ſuffer," exclaimed he, "for ſuch bleſſings and happineſs! O merciful father! if the injured ſpirit of my ſire walks in this deſerted abbey, and ſeeks the preſence of his ſon, ſhould I not ſtrive for the interview,

interview, though it might chill my nature at the time?"

"Go!" pronounced a voice, followed by a diſmal groan.

Matilda ſunk into a chair.——Alfred held her arm, and trembled.

"In the name of our Holy Virgin," ſaid he, "anſwer me, who and what thou art."

"Go,—go,—go!" repeated the voice, three times; and then with another groan it ſeemed to aſcend and die away.

"Surely," ſaid Alfred, "heaven interferes in my behalf, and tells me to proceed!——Now, Matilda, you can urge no objection."

She ſighed deeply.

"But you are ill: we had better go down to the parlour immediately."

"I am indeed," ſhe anſwered—"hardly able to ſtand."

Her brother partly carried her down the ſtairs, and placed her on a ſofa;—ſhe directly fell into ſtrong hyſteric fits, which laſted a conſiderable time;——every method was taken for her recovery; and they were greatly alarmed. At length, however, ſhe ſeemed more compoſed, and, after ſome hours, found herſelf much better, though extremely weak.

Leonard, who had hitherto been made acquainted with every extraordinary circumſtance, was now in his turn a wondering ſpectator; and Agnes, ſtill more diſtreſſed and terrified, declared it would be the happieſt moment of her life, when

ſhe

ſhe once found herſelf at ſome diſtance from ſo diſmal and horrid an abode. Alfred muſed in melancholy ſilence on the ſtrange voice he had heard; nor had he now a ſingle doubt of a ſupernatural beings haunting the chambers of the abbey. "Surely," thought he, "that room, where it is likely my father loſt his life, is the moſt probable place to be viſited by his diſturbed ſpirit. Yet, may not my ſenſes be ſo far overcome by ſeeing the departed ſhade of a parent whom I never knew, but who was ſuppoſed to have been baſely murdered, as to prevent my utterance at the critical moment of its appearance?"

Matilda was ſilent and melancholy:—ſhe conſidered it would now be ridiculous to ſtrive to prevent Alfred from watching in the weſt tower, ſince ſo ſtrange an occurrence had ſtrengthened that reſolution which he had before taken; yet fears for his ſafety harraſſed her imagination, and almoſt threw her into a ſtate of inſanity.

Only one method ſhe could think of, that would in any degree alleviate her anxiety; which was to propoſe his having Leonard to attend him the whole night; but then ſhe ſhrunk with terror from the thought of ſleeping at ſuch a diſtance from any one but Agnes, and feared again ſhe might ſee the figure in her chamber. Her regard, however, for her brother made her reſolve to ſacrifice her own feelings, and at leaſt make the propoſal to him.

After dinner they contrived to ſend Agnes into the hall for a few minutes; and Leonard was then

then made acquainted with the events of the morning, and with the determination his maſter had taken of watching himſelf that night in the tower.

Leonard turned pale.

" For heaven's ſake, ſir," ſaid he, " do not attempt it!"

" But conſider," replied Alfred, " the words which the voice repeated."

Leonard could make no anſwer, but turned away with horror and ſurpriſe.

" At all events," ſaid Alfred, " Agnes muſt not know of this affair, nor of my viſit to the deſerted chamber.——We muſt therefore contrive to make every thing ready without her knowledge, and in ſuch a manner that I may firſt go into my own room, as if to retire to reſt, and after ſome little time ſteal to the weſt tower."

Matilda and Leonard ſhuddered at the idea of what might happen there: yet neither, after what had happened, could attempt—at leaſt they knew it would be of no avail to attempt to perſuade him to relinquiſh his intention.——Agnes now entered.——Alfred and Leonard immediately aſcended to their chamber, and conveyed a table, with ſome books, wine, and proviſion, to the apartment before mentioned, where thoſe ſpots of blood were to be ſeen, which, in all human probability, was that of Alfred's father.

Leonard alſo laid a wood fire, and made the room as comfortable as poſſible.

Having

Having done this, they returned to the parlour, and Matilda ſoon found an opportunity to requeſt he would let Leonard remain with him the whole night; but her brother poſitively refuſed it, though he at laſt agreed Leonard ſhould accompany him to the tower, but then return directly. Alfred propoſed a walk to the hermit; but Matilda appeared too ill to undertake it;—they therefore poſtponed it till the next day. Supper-time at length arrived, and anxiety was marked on the features of all:—Alfred was occupied by the thoughts of what he might be witneſs to in the ſhort ſpace of a few hours; and Matilda, alarmed for his welfare, and terrified at even entering her chamber,——dreading leſt the midnight hour ſhould again ſhow her the phantom.——Leonard weighed in his mind the difference of their ſituation: when poſſeſſed of a tender parent, they knew no unhappineſs, except for the misfortunes and ſorrows of others, which they were ever ready to pity and aſſiſt.—Agnes was almoſt afraid to turn her head, for fear of ſeeing ſome hideous ſpectre.

All wiſhed to delay retiring to reſt, and they talked ſome time after ſupper on indifferent ſubjects,——but with heavy hearts;——till at length Alfred aroſe.——They aſcended the great ſtaircaſe, and parted for the night.

## CHAP. IV.

### MYSTERIOUS EVENTS.

*——— Prythee, ſee there!*
*Behold! Look! Lo!—How ſay you?*
*Why, what care I? If thou canſt nod, ſpeak to't;*
*If charnel-houſes and our graves muſt ſend*
*Thoſe that we buy, back,—our monuments*
*Shall be the maws of kites.*

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN an opinion is once formed, every ſucceeding circumſtance ſeems to confirm what our ideas have before ſuggeſted; and though of a far different nature, every object is referred to the ſame point of view.

Thus it was with Matilda;——ſhe no longer doubted, and a dreadful certainty took place: ſhe did not now heſitate whether ſuch things might be, but ſhe fervently believed ſuch things were; and conſequently every trivial event ſtrengthened this imaginatio.

Agnes, as uſual, was ſoon in bed; but Matilda reſolved to watch the caſement of the tower. "My brother," thought ſhe, "will ſhortly be there;

there; and it will be ſome little comfort to ſee the dim light that proceeds from his lamp."

A book was her excuſe for not undreſſing,—— and Agnes in about a quarter of an hour was aſleep.

Alfred and Leonard remained in their chamber ſome time. It was near midnight when Matilda heard them leave it; her heart palpitated for their ſituation, and ſhe ſhrunk with horror from her own. Neither was now near:—the ſhadow of the preceding night preſented itſelf to her fancy, and her blood was chilled at the very thought. Thunder rolled over the abbey, and pale flaſhes of lightning darted on the mouldering ruins.—— Matilda could not yet diſcern a light; ſhe conceived they muſt be a conſiderable time aſcending,——while her fears and anxiety made her forget that they had firſt to go down the great ſtairs, and afterwards up thoſe of the weſt tower.

At length a faint glimmering appeared, which was a kind of ſignal to her that they had entered the chamber.

The thunder became more awful, and awoke Agnes—

"Good heavens, mademoiſelle, are you up yet?—What a dreadful night!"

"It is rather ſtormy," replied Matilda, ſtriving to be compoſed.

"Rather ſtormy, mademoiſelle! why the thunder is horrid, and the lightning too is extremely bad: you had better move from the window;—it is very dangerous to ſtand ſo near it."

Matilda

Matilda took her advice. The lightning became much worſe; ſhe ſat down by the ſide of the bed, and requeſted Agnes to compoſe herſelf to reſt.

"But are you not going to give up reading for the night?"

"I have juſt finiſhed the book," anſwered Matilda, "and then ſhall go to reſt."

There being now a little interval in the ſtorm, Agnes was ſoon in a ſlumber.

By this time ſhe expected Leonard would have returned to his chamber; but ſhe had not yet heard him enter it. The light ſtill continued in the caſement; but the ſtorm was ſo very violent as to prevent her being continually at the window.

Near a quarter of an hour elapſed, and ſhe heard nothing of Leonard.——Seated on the bed, ſhe dared not turn herſelf towards the glaſs, but kept her eyes fixed on the ground, terrified at the idea of even looking round the room.——At laſt a noiſe, which ſeemed to proceed from the court below, made her riſe, and go to the window.——She could ſee no one, yet heard a kind of knocking at the outer gates.——Who or what it could be, ſhe was at a loſs to imagine; and, the noiſe increaſing, ſhe became more uneaſy and aſtoniſhed.——She was equally unable alſo to account for Leonard's ſtay, and conceived ſomething very extraordinary muſt have happened,

The

The noiſe now ceaſed for ſome little time, but afterwards became more clamorous; and at laſt, by the ſound, the gates ſeemed to burſt open.—— A thought ſtruck Matilda, that they might be diſcovered, and that the officers of juſtice were come for her brother.—She trembled at the ſuppoſition, but ſtill remained at the caſement.

After a ſhort period, ſhe perceived four men armed approach the abbey:——two of them had lanterns, and the others followed directly after. Matilda was nearly diſtracted; ſhe knew not in what manner to act. Leonard might be returned, though ſhe had not heard him.——She tapped at the door, but received no anſwer.—She knocked louder:——all was ſilent!——ſhe entered the chamber, but it was entirely deſerted. Having liſtened at the top of the ſtair-caſe, and heard them enter the hall, from which they proceeded to the parlour, all fears of ſupernatural appearances vaniſhed from her mind, and the preſervation of Alfred employed every faculty. She determined to deſcend, and ſtrive to make out, unperceived, the occaſion of their viſit.

But then, if Agnes ſhould awake, and find no one near, what would be her ſituation?—Matilda heſitated a little, but at laſt reſolved to run the hazard for the ſake of her brother. She therefore took the lamp, and ſoftly ſtepped down to the hall, which having croſſed towards the door of the parlour, ſhe ſtopped, and through the crevice could ſee that they were all ſeated round the ſupper table, which had been left ſtanding in the

ſame

ſame place, and on which was ſome wine:—this they were making free with, and ſeemed in high mirth.

Ready to ſink with anxiety, ſhe ſupported herſelf againſt a column; and the door not being quite cloſed, ſhe had a view of each of their countenances, at different times, as they turned round to ſpeak to each other.—By their dreſs and language ſhe found they were Italians.

"Puſh the bottle about!" cried one, who ſeemed to be a kind of ſuperior, and whoſe viſage was, if poſſible, fiercer than thoſe of his comrades: "nobody loves good wine better than I do, particularly when it is got cheap."

Here was a loud laugh, and a boiſterous chorus of a ſong uſed by banditti.—At laſt ſilence was in ſome meaſure reſtored; and one who ſat on the right ſide of him that ſpoke, reminded him not to make too free with the bottle, and forget the buſineſs they came upon.

"True! true!" anſwered he: "I thank you for your caution; for faith there is a great danger of it, as you ſay, when we are ſeated at ſuch a table as this.——But now to buſineſs;—come, in the firſt place, we are to contrive in what manner to find him; for my own part I propoſe to ———"

Here a loud clap of thunder rolled over the abbey; and ſhe was unable to diſtinguiſh what followed.

After ſome time ſhe heard the voice of the third.

"It

"It is very true," ſays he, "that might do well; but I have reaſon to think he is in the weſt tower to-night, by the light I ſaw in the caſement."

"Piſh!" anſwered the firſt, "that place is haunted; I have often ſeen a light in it, when not a ſoul inhabited the abbey."

Matilda trembled violently.

"Ah! that I know very well, ſignor: but by what"———

Here again the thunder interrupted the diſtracted liſtener, and ſhe loſt the remainder of the ſentence.—At length all was once more ſilent.

"Well, well," ſaid the firſt, "if that is the caſe, why we muſt directly make our road to the weſt tower: but the devil take me if I know which is the way to it."

"Nor I," exclaimed each of the others, riſing.

"Never mind," anſwered the firſt: "I'll warrant we will find it."

This was enough for Matilda;—ſhe heard no more, but immediately departed towards the ſtair-caſe that led to the tower, with an intent to acquaint her brother with the arrival of the unwelcome viſitors.——Had ſhe been told, half an hour before, that ſhe could have had the courage to proceed alone at midnight to the weſt tower,—ſhe would poſitively have declared it would have been impoſſible: but now, though a great degree of terror was left, yet the chief part was obliterated in the idea of preſerving her brother's life.

She

She hurried acroſs the hall, but, in her agitation, miſtook the turning to the ſtairs, and found herſelf before the heavy grate-work gates of the chapel. She ſtopped a moment to fetch breath.—While her eyes were vacantly fixed on the ruins of this ancient place of worſhip, a faint glimmering ſeemed to move on one ſide of the aiſles; and, in about a minute, a figure with a lamp glided along the body of the chapel. This brought Matilda to a recollection of her ſituation; —her tottering limbs almoſt refuſed their office: —ſhe partly ſtaggered from the gates, and returned to find the opening to the ſtair-caſe. This ſhe fortunately found, and began to aſcend the narrow ſtone ſtairs; while every few minutes ſhe ſtopped, and thought ſhe heard a footſtep behind her—then looked back, but all was quiet, except the thunder, which ſtill continued with equal violence. Matilda, faint and breathleſs, at length arrived at the firſt landing. Here ſhe halted, and ſeated herſelf for a moment under a caſement.

The lightning darted through into the oppoſite apartment, which was that which contained the few implements of war, and martial inſtruments, ——and ſhowed the gloomy appearance of the room.——One flaſh greater than the reſt illumined the whole ſpace; and, at the ſame inſtant, a figure ſtalked acroſs, and ſeemed to vaniſh at the further end. Matilda gave a faint ſhriek, and hurried up the remainder of the ſtairs; and, when arrived at the top, burſt into the fatal chamber of the

the weſt tower, and there perceived her brother ſitting alone at the table, his hand on his ſword, —his eyes fixed on a particular part of the room, with a wild look of horror and agony,—while his whole frame ſhook with convulſive terror.

"Alfred!" exclaimed Matilda, ſinking on a chair.

He turned his eyes towards her, and ſtarted.

"Ah! who and what art thou, that appeareſt to me in the ſhape——"

Matilda fell into a fainting fit.—When ſhe recovered, ſhe found her brother ſtanding over her, and adminiſtering ſome wine and water. His haggard countenance met hers when ſhe opened her eyes; and with a look of diſtraction he aſked her what brought her there.

"Anxiety for your ſafety," anſwered ſhe,—— and immediately related to him, in as few words as poſſible, the ſcene ſhe had been witneſs to, concerning the men who were now in the abbey.

"Merciful father!" he exclaimed, "how much longer ſhall I be harraſſed with horror and misfortunes, which follow each other ſo quickly, that I am not able to extricate myſelf from one, before it is ſucceeded by a greater, which ſeems at once to overwhelm me with ruin and deſpair? —What am I ſaying?" continued he: "dare I to queſtion the Almighty,—wretch that I am,—and repine at thoſe adverſities he has ordained I ſhould experience?"

"Stand

"Stand not here," ſaid Matilda, "but leave this part of the building.—They will, I am afraid, begin to aſcend the ſtair-caſe before we can get down.—Pray make haſte.—If you can but evade them ſo as to attain the great ſtair-caſe, you may conceal yourſelf in ſome of the further apartments beyond our chambers, while they are ſearching here."

They now began to deſcend (Alfred having put out the lamp in the chamber), and fortunately found themſelves at the bottom, without any interruption,—but heard ſome voices at the further end of the paſſage, next the chapel by the great gates.—They ſtopped not to liſten, but immediately ran up the principal ſtairs.—At the top they diſcovered Leonard.

"For heaven's ſake, Leonard," exclaimed both brother and ſiſter, "where have you been?"

"Faith," returned Leonard, "that I can hardly tell; but, by ſome means or other, I turned wrong on the ſtair-caſe of the weſt tower when I left my maſter to come back to my chamber.—It led me into a ſmall paſſage, and I there found ſome ſtone ſteps.——Thinking that this was only an angle, and that it would lead me to the ſame ſpot as if I had continued right, I deſcended them, but ſoon found my error, and diſcovered myſelf among the ruins of the chapel.——Theſe I croſſed, to read a ſtone which was erected to the memory of the late count."

This explained to Matilda the figure which ſhe had ſeen as ſhe was going to her brother; ſhe did not

not however interrupt him; and Leonard told them that he ſoon found his way to the hall, but had alſo heard ſtrange voices, of perſons who ſeemed to be ſearching the abbey; on which account he had called Agnes, who had greatly alarmed herſelf and him when they found Matilda was abſent.

They were now joined by Agnes, who flew into the arms of her fair friend, who, her imagination had told her, was run away with by the ghoſts.——The party now began to proceed towards the further chambers,—Agnes ſupported by Leonard, and Matilda by her brother.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

WITH ſolitary and ſilent ſteps they croſſed ſeveral apartments, till they came to the paſſage which was before deſcribed, and which led to the gloomy chamber that, it was ſuppoſed, had formerly contained a corpſe lying in ſtate.—Matilda dreaded to enter it; ſhe well remembered the appearance of it, when with her brother ſhe examined thoſe rooms.

But there was now no alternative: it ended the ſuite, and therefore it was the moſt likely one to conceal them.

After croſſing the paſſage, they arrived at the folding doors:——Matilda and Alfred were foremoſt: the latter puſhed againſt them, and they flew open.——The chamber was illuminated.——All ſtarted back with aſtoniſhment and horror: Agnes faintly ſcreamed; and it was ſome minutes before they proceeded. At length, however, they advanced, and perceived that the pieces of wax tapers in the black glaſſes, which they had before obſerved, were now lighted, and ſerved to ſhow the diſmal terrific ſcene around them.——In every other reſpect the apartment was exactly the ſame, nor could the trace of any foot-ſtep be diſcovered. Both were ſilent: their own reflections were ſufficient. Alfred had witneſſed ſo much

much in the abbey, that he found it impoſſible to turn off the ſubject with jeſt, or even reaſoning. Having ſeated his ſiſter and Agnes, he ſtood by them with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the floor;——Leonard was in the ſame poſture, on the other ſide.

They had not remained in this ſituation above ten minutes, when a loud clap of thunder rolled over the building.——It was followed by a convulſive ſhock of nature, which ſeemed to take effect on the part where they ſtood; and at that moment the Corinthian capital of a large column greatly decayed fell to the ground with a moſt tremendous noiſe.

Both Matilda and Agnes were nearly inſenſible; Leonard was ſtupefied with horror, and Alfred diſtracted. Some moments after, when the latter perceived ſomething raiſed above the ſhaft of the pillar, his curioſity led him to go near: he did ſo, and to his ſurpriſe found it was a marble hand, holding a length of ſilver chain, at the bottom of which was a gold and bloody key.——He called his ſiſter, Agnes, and Leonard, to look at it,—then claſped hold of it, and diſentangled the chain from the hand.——A flaſh of lightning, and a clap of thunder, again called their attention; when turning from the column, the figure and its lamp again ſtood before them, lifted up its arms in token of pleaſure, and vaniſhed through the floor from their ſight.

Agnes

Agnes ſcreamed and fell into ſtrong hyſterics, while Matilda, ſupported by her brother, fainted away.

It was near an hour before they recovered.—The ſtorm had now in ſome meaſure abated: and Alfred, thinking he had heard during the latter part of the time a noiſe like the cloſing of the abbey gates, deſired Leonard to look firſt from the great ſtairs, and then proceed down, and ſearch the lower part of the building.

Leonard having left them, Alfred began to give as much conſolation as was in his power to Agnes and his ſiſter: but his words faultered, as he attempted to uſe arguments of comfort, while ideas of miſery and diſtreſs came too forcibly, to admit the bright and cheering ray of hope.——Leonard returned with the agreeable intelligence that the unwelcome viſitors had left the abbey. They therefore, after the lights were put out, made their way to their chambers, and retired; yet though their harraſſed minds received, in ſome degree, the oblivion of ſleep, it was of that kind which occaſioned tormenting and horrid flights of fancy.

Matilda appeared extremely ill at breakfaſt; Alfred produced the key which in ſo wonderful a manner he had obtained poſſeſſion of.——They were at a loſs to know to what it belonged, when Matilda recollected the cabinet in her chamber; and, according to the ſize, it ſeemed to be deſigned for that lock.——They deferred, however, trying it, till another opportunity, as they intended

intended viſiting father Peter before dinner.—— They were ſoon equipped for their little journey, and proceeded to the cave.

Father Peter was ſeated at a table, in a melancholy poſture. On one ſide of him was his crucifix, and before him ſeveral papers, which he put away immediately as they entered.

Having teſtified great pleaſure at ſeeing them, the converſation became general, and they found that their ſuppoſition was right, concerning his being on a viſit to ſome peaſants, when they found him abſent from his habitation.

They had been in the cave about an hour, when father Peter, while talking with unuſual cheaifulneſs, was ſuddenly taken ill, and fainted away in Alfred's arms.

Matilda and Agnes adminiſtered ſome cordials which they found near, while Leonard unbuttoned his veſt, in order to give him air; when they beheld ſuſpended on his breaſt an elegant miniature of a lady, ſet in gold, and adorned with pearls. But how great was Alfred's aſtoniſhment, to behold the exact reſemblance of lady Caroline Albourne!——No notice was, however, taken: for all except him were too much engaged to obſerve the likeneſs.

Father Peter by degrees recovered, and thanked them for their attention. He ſaid he was ſubject to ſuch fits, and expected to pay the debt of nature, at the approach of each of them:—— "But oh! my God!" he exclaimed, "ſpare me

me a little longer, till a mighty work is effected! and then I die in peace."

They now took their leave, and returned to the abbey.——Alfred mentioned his obſervation on the miniature, and it was the cauſe of reflections the moſt uncomfortable and diſtreſſing.—— The ſight of a picture which reſembled in ſo ſtriking a manner the countenance of a beloved object, brought to his memory ſcenes of happineſs he had once hoped to have enjoyed, but which were now, to all human probability, for ever blaſted.

The charming lady Caroline he ſuppoſed to be hundreds of miles diſtant: and he conſidered it as by no means an improbable ſuppoſition that ſhe might now be in the arms of another.——He informed his ſiſter and Leonard that he again intended to watch in the weſt tower that night; but determinedly refuſed to accept of even Leonard's attendance in the chamber, that he might be in readineſs to conduct her and Agnes to the other part of the abbey, ſhould they again be diſturbed by the viſitors of the night before.—— After dinner, Leonard ſaid he was going to the public market; but Matilda knew this was the uſual excuſe.——Alfred adviſed his ſiſter to examine the cabinet after Agnes was aſleep: this was agreed on, and he delivered her the key.

Leonard returned in about two hours, and had a private conference with his maſter. Both ſeemed much pleaſed with ſome information they had received

received. Supper-time arrived; and after a ſhort repaſt they retired to their apartments.

Alfred, in about half an hour after, took a lamp, ſoftly left his chamber, and proceeded to that of the weſt tower.——Agnes was not aſleep ſo ſoon as uſual: ſhe talked of the horrors they had experienced, and trembled for fear of a repetition of them in her dreams. At length, however, ſhe fell under the influence of the heavy god; and Matilda, with a palpitating heart, applied the gold key to the cabinet, when, after a little difficulty, the folding doors flew open.

It was elegantly adorned with gilt Italian figures of conſiderable ſize, in the habits of former times. The firſt three drawers which Matilda opened, contained coins of gold and ſilver to a great amount. The ſight of the treaſure, though it for a moment elevated her, cauſed, after a little reflection, but ſmall degree of pleaſure; it was none of their property, nor had they any proof to the right of poſſeſſing it.——The fourth and fifth drawers contained jewels, the moſt beautiful ſhe had ever ſeen, carefully preſerved in gold caſkets.——The ſixth drawer was full of papers; ſome of which were letters that had paſſed between the old count Maſerini and his lady, in their youth, before their marriage; and ſeveral after, when the count was on buſineſs at the court of Spain.——In one of theſe he mentioned his intention of purchaſing Graſville Abbey, and in the next his having done it, and taken poſſeſſion of the title to that eſtate. He

concluded with hopes that his ſon Percival Maſerini might live to enjoy it after him.——There were a few fragments of memorandums which formed the contents of the ſixth drawer.

In the ſeventh drawer ſhe found four miniature paintings, elegantly mounted with pearls, gold, and jewels of great value.——Two of them repreſented a lady and gentleman in the prime of life, whom Matilda ſuppoſed to be the count and his lady; the other two were children, one of whom reſembled her own picture of her father: and its companion was, ſhe had little doubt, intended for his ſiſter Siſera Maſerini.——The remaining part of the drawer was filled with ornaments for women in former times.

Matilda now drew forth the eighth and laſt drawer, when the only articles it contained were a piece of ribband, one end of which ſhowed its remainder had been parted by force,——and a ſmall roll of parchment, which was filled with writing, and, though in ſome meaſure defaced by time, with ſome little pains it was eaſily to be read.——The language was French; but what were Matilda's ſenſations, when ſhe beheld her father's name at the bottom!——A ſudden faintneſs ſeized her, and ſhe ſunk into an arm chair. A flood of tears, however, fortunately gave relief, and ſhe found herſelf able to peruſe the manuſcript, which contained the following words, and ſhowed plainly the diſtracted ſtate of mind the writer laboured under:——

"Oh!

« Oh! father of mercy, where,——where, Oh! my God, is thy thunder to cruſh to the earth thoſe who diſgrace thy heavenly image? My wife!——my ſiſter!——I ſee ye,——I claſp ye!——Ah! my ſoul! they are but figures ſent by hell to aid my tormentors, and burſt my very heart-ſtrings with grief!

* * *

« Count D'Ollifont, where are you?——dare me to ſingle combat! uſe any means but treachery.——Damnable villain!——dragged from all my heart held moſt dear, immured in a horrid confinement, with the dreadful expectation of an ignominious death!

* * *

« Clementina! Siſera! where are ye?—— Oh! my father, if thou art permitted to look down from thy bleſſed abode in heaven, on the miſeries of thy ſon,——will not tears, ſuch as angels weep, burſt forth, and thy frame, though immortal, receive a ſhock of horror?

* * *

« My wife! my ſiſter!—I am ſick at heart,—— appear to me,——give me ſome comfort within theſe gloomy walls!—Oh, D'Ollifont! D'Ollifont! thou art planning a horrid deed!—Thou thirſteſt for my blood!——why not take thy fill at once, and end this life of torture?——why ſhrink?——why ſtay the murderous dagger from

my breaſt——when thy coward heart muſt know I am wholly in thy power, unable to reſiſt the tyrannic rod of oppreſſion?

* * *

"Father Peter! I know I have thy pity:—but thou art entangled in the ſnares of a wretch, and unable to extricate thyſelf from the helliſh bondage.——Thou knoweſt all, and thou wilt know my end.——To thee then muſt I look for reparation. On thee muſt it depend, to be an inſtrument of almighty juſtice, and give blood for blood!

* * *

"Hark! the tormentors will ſoon be here; one little hour, and this injured frame is levelled with the duſt.—Oh! my God, forgive my enemies, protect my poor deſerted wife, and the offspring of our love, if yet in this world of woe.——My ſiſter too! defend her from the enemies of our houſe.——All's dark, all's cheerleſs; muſt I not have one ray of light to eaſe the pang of diſſolution?——Muſt no wife, no ſiſter, no friend, nor even charitable ſtranger, give one ſigh or parting look of pity, ere theſe eyes are cloſed for ever?——Muſt none but murderers, grinning at their foul-done deed, receive the quivering laſt-drawn breath of life?——Poiſon or daggers is the choice!——It matters not: each tends to the ſame great end.——Hark! hark! I hear them coming. The bell ſtrikes one! The

The hour well ſuits the horrid act.——Almighty father! thy influence ſpreads around me,——and rays of bleſſed hope give warmth to my every faculty.——I am light as air: all miſery vaniſhes: I die with pleaſure. Ye murderers, appear! I am now prepared to receive you, even with ecſtacy.——Terror, diſtreſs, and horror, are no more.——Hell ſinks before me.——The dark and gloomy vapours of deſpair are diſpelled by the glorious light of heaven, and the refulgent beams of a merciful redeemer.

"I ſee,—Oh! my God! my God! I mount; ——I fly;——nature itſelf ſeems gone.——The world's a maſs of matter, now to me no more!"

CHAP.

## CHAP. VI.

### MIDNIGHT TRANSACTIONS.

*——— Now o'er one half the world*
*Nature ſeems dead, and wicked dreams abuſe*
*The curtain'd ſleep; now witchcraft celebrates*
*Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,*
*Alarum'd by his ſentinel the wolf,*
*Who howls his watch, thus with his ſtealthy pace,*
*With Tarquin's raviſhing ſtrides, towards his ſign*
*Moves like a ghoſt.*

MACBETH.

"UNFORTUNATE parent! heaven wil ſurely avenge thy wrongs: the wrath of the Almighty muſt at a future time fall on him, who, with fiend-like malice, could plunge the innocent into miſery, wretchedneſs, and deſpair."

Theſe were the words of Matilda, as ſhe dropped the manuſcript from her hands, and burſt into a flood of tears. Such affecting mournful complaints, ſuch a picture of horror and diſtreſs, would have greatly ſhocked ſher, had they proceeded from one not bound to her by the ties of relatonſhip,

relationſhip or even thoſe of friendſhip: but the idea of a father undergoing thoſe ſufferings, contributed greatly to increaſe that grief and melancholy which ſhe at preſent experienced.

Having wept for a conſiderable time, ſhe found herſelf in ſome degree recovered. But ſhe was entirely at a loſs to know in what manner to act with reſpect to the information ſhe ſhould give to her brother relative to the manuſcript. Matilda well knew his natural warmth of temper would not permit him to uſe diſcretion in his inquiries of father Peter; and the ſtrange myſterious behaviour of this man had prevented them from even truſting him with their ſituation. It was true, the paper ſhe had found ſpoke well of him: but how eaſily might her poor father have been deceived by artful profeſſions of friendſhip to hide the lurking villany of his ſoul, and make his punctuality to the count's orders appear in leſs infamous and horrid colours. Now, ſhould this man be ſtill kept by D'Ollifont as a ſpy upon the abbey, her brother's impetuoſity might cauſe him to throw himſelf in father Peter's power, without firſt knowing either his character or inclination to ſerve them.

Matilda was perfectly convinced theſe conſiderations were juſt, and wiſhed to procure herſelf an explanation from the hermit: but to viſit him alone undiſcovered, was an expedient ſhe was entirely ignorant how to contrive any means to effect:——yet it was actually neceſſary father Peter

Peter ſhould be conſulted, and that immediately.

After ſome ſtudy, a thought ſtruck her, that ſhe might ſee him at night, after her brother, Leonard, and Agnes, had retired to reſt; but then ſhe ſhrunk from the idea of walking to the cave at ſo late an hour. Second reflection, however ſeemed to tell her ſhe had nothing to fear; and that would be the only method ſhe could take to obtain an interview, without the knowledge of any other perſon. At length ſhe came to a determination to try her project the following night; and by the time this reſolution was formed, day-light darted through the caſement of her chamber, and ſeemed to enliven nature with its cheering rays.

She had not yet heard Alfred enter his room: but whenever ſhe had looked towards the weſt tower, as ſhe had done ſeveral times in the courſe of the night, the light ſeemed to continue in the ſame place. This trifling obſervation gave her ſome degree of comfort, as ſhe ſuppoſed every thing remained quiet.

Some little time after, ſhe heard Alfred open his chamber door, and ſpeak to Leonard. Matilda felt conſiderable happineſs at his ſafety: and as ſhe was now perfectly ſatisfied in that reſpect, ſhe deſired Agnes, when ſhe aroſe, not to wait breakfaſt for her; as, having received but little reſt during the night, ſhe intended now to compoſe herſelf to ſleep.

She

She aroſe at a late hour, and found her brother, Leonard, and Agnes, in the parlour. The former was reading; and though his countenance was extremely pale, yet ſhe thought ſhe could perceive an inward ſatisfaction and ſerenity, ſhe had lately been ſeldom witneſs to.

Alfred ſoon requeſted to ſpeak with her alone, and with conſiderable eagerneſs, aſked her if ſhe had found any thing of conſequence in the cabinet.—Matilda acquainted him with every article, except the manuſcript; he ſeemed in ſome meaſure diſappointed, but ſhowed great pleaſure at the idea of the money.

Matilda was rather ſurpriſed.—"That money," ſaid ſhe, "Alfred, we have no right to; nor do I know, in our ſituation, that it would be of any material ſervice, were it our own."

"We muſt at all events make free with it, Matilda; I have the ſtrongeſt reaſon to ſuppoſe that it does belong to us; and beſides we are now in the greateſt want of it."

"How ſo?" replied his ſiſter, ſtill more aſtoniſhed. "You told me the other day we had enough to ſupport us for ſome time at leaſt."

"True," anſwered Alfred: "but I have now other uſes for wealth; in ſhort, Matilda, this night has diſcovered to me circumſtances of a moſt wonderful nature; and the horrid myſtery of this dreadful abbey is at length unravelled. Perhaps we may remain here a ſhort time longer: but I hope you will ſoon ſee theſe gloomy ſcenes

of adverſity and ſorrow transformed to days and years of tranquillity, happineſs, and comfort."

Matilda ſtood the image of amazement; and, for a moment, ſhe thought her brother inſane; but the glow of pleaſure which overſpread his face, confirmed that his words were true; and his features once more appeared the ſame as when in former times ſhe had ſeen him, with his own hand, relieve the ſhivering famiſhed beggar, and, his countenance glowing with compaſſion and benevolence, watch the poor wretch recover vital warmth and ſtrength from the nouriſhment he had adminiſtered. Matilda catched the heart-felt joy; but on her it took a different effect, and ſhe burſt into tears. Nor was Agnes's joy leſs, when ſhe was informed of the good intelligence. She wept with pleaſure at the idea of leaving the abbey, and ſtill remaining with her dear young lady.

The good old Leonard too was ſeen to wipe his eyes, and heave a ſigh of ecſtaſy at this unexpected turn of fortune.

Alfred, however, would give no ſatisfactory anſwer to their inquiries concerning what he had ſeen in the weſt tower: he only told them that the abbey muſt be ſtill their habitation for a ſhort period; but the time would paſs away with far more comfort than it had hitherto done.

Dinner-time arrived: but the intelligence had cloyed every appetite; and it was removed almoſt without being taſted. Alfred, about half an hour after

after, left the abbey, and ſaid he ſhould return towards evening.

Matilda had now time to conſider whether, after what ſhe had heard, it would be proper to conceal the manuſcript from her brother; and, though many reaſons prompted her to give it to him immediately, yet a little reflection told her that the ſame ill conſequence ſhe had before conceived, might ariſe from it. He might not yet be acquainted with the ſufferings of his father, nor with the knowledge the hermit had of his diſtreſs and death. In ſhort, ſhe reſolved to act as ſhe had before determined, and pay father Peter a viſit at midnight. But ſhe wiſhed not to leave Agnes without ſpeaking: an excuſe might ſerve, that ſhe had left ſome books in the parlour, which ſhe wiſhed to look over, and which might detain her ſome time to procure.

Alfred returned at the time he mentioned, and informed them he did not intend to watch in the tower that night. The evening was ſpent with ſome degree of comfort, and at an early hour they retired to reſt. Agnes was ſoon aſleep, and Matilda read till near midnight. During that time ſhe often looked at the caſement of the weſt tower, but no light nor figure appeared. Having awaked Agnes, ſhe informed her ſhe was going to look for a book ſhe had left in the parlour. Agnes did not by any means like the idea of being left alone in the chamber: but Matilda reminded her that her brother and Leonard were within

within call, in the next room; but ſhe requeſted her to make no noiſe without there was actually a neceſſity.—She waited a little time, and had the pleaſure to find Agnes aſleep before ſhe left the apartment.

Matilda took the lamp and having ſoftly deſcended the great ſtairs, proceeded through the hall, and from that to the firſt court, which ſoon brought her to the outer one.

She now began to tremble and feel her ſituation. To be entirely alone at ſuch an hour of the night, was an idea in many reſpects terrific. The pale and half-obſcured moon gave but an imperfect light; and that light was often eclipſed by dark heavy clouds, which ſeemed to riſe from the ſouth, and form a gloomy mountain of dark miſt towards the weſt; while vivid flaſhes of lightning darted from the horizon, and illumined the gathered clouds on the ſouth with uncommon ſtrength.

Matilda viewed the awful ſcene with emotion, and was ſeveral times going to turn back; but ſhe chid herſelf for want of fortitude, and attempted to laugh at thoſe fears, which now almoſt prevented her from ſupporting herſelf.

She had, however, arrived nearly half way to the cave, when a ſound of human voices ſtruck her ear at ſome diſtance.

Matilda liſtened,—thought it might only be a ſoft breeze which waved the thick groves of cypreſs that ſurrounded her. But ſhe heard it again, and

and was convinced ſhe was right: it ſeemed like a chorus, or the chaunting of a funeral hymn for the ſoul of a deceaſed perſon.

She ſtopped, and leaning againſt a broken pedeſtal which had formerly borne a ſtatue, liſtened with ſome degree of pleaſure to the ſolemn dirge. But the voices ſeemed now to approach much nearer; and ſhe perceived a glare of light at ſome diſtance above the foliage, which informed her the perſons whom ſhe had heard were near.—Terror at being diſcovered, now overcame every other conſideration, and with eager eye ſhe ſcrutiniſed each ſide of the grove, to find a place of concealment. At length ſhe fortunately found a ſmall opening in one part, which, by putting back the boughs, with ſome little trouble, admitted and cloſed her from view. She now conceived herſelf to be ſafe from obſervation, though there was a part through which ſhe could plainly diſcover whatever paſſed on the other ſide.

Five minutes did not elapſe before a proceſſion of men entered the path, ſtill ſinging in the ſame ſolemn manner. A prieſt of holy orders proceeded firſt; but how greatly was ſhe aſtoniſhed, to ſee him followed by about twelve men, who had every appearance of banditti in dreſs and figure! The firſt ſix carried torches; the other half followed after, with ſlow and melancholy ſteps. Theſe were ſucceeded by ſix more, bearing a coffin on their ſhoulders, which was cover-

ed

ed with a black velvet pall, and adorned with trophies.

Matilda could hardly ſuppoſe herſelf awake; yet by the pale moon every figure ſeemed perfect, and ſhe thought ſhe could, in the faces of the laſt four, diſcover the viſitors to the abbey on a former night. The whole company halted at the pedeſtal, when, to the amazement of Matilda, two of them removed a large ſtone, which formed the cap, and part of a Corinthian baſe. The pedeſtal then parted, and was let down, which diſcovered the entrance to a large vault. The funeral ſervice was then read by the prieſt who walked firſt, after which the coffin was carried down by four of the bearers. Another dirge was then ſung, and the pedeſtal was cloſed, the cap, &c. being replaced. The proceſſion having turned, proceeded back in the ſame manner, till ſhe loſt ſight of them at the extremity of the grove.

Though elated at the idea of having eſcaped diſcovery, ſhe felt conſiderable awe at the ſolemn ſcene. In ſhort, the ſight of this midnight funeral, added to the ſtrange dreſſes of the mourners, impreſſed on her mind a degree of terror which ſhe was unable to overcome. Having left her ſecret place of retirement, ſhe paſſed haſtily the ſtrange ſepulchre, and with hurried and trembling ſteps, breathleſs with agitation, arrived at the cave of Father Peter. His lamp was burning, and at a diſtance ſhe could perceive him at his

midnight

midnight devotions. His aged reverend figure was in the ſame poſture as when they firſt diſcovered him; and his crucifix, books, and hour-glaſs, as uſual, ſtood before him.

CHAP.

## CHAP. VII.

MATILDA ſtopped a few moments to collect herſelf, before ſhe diſcovered to the inhabitant of this recluſe cell his midnight viſitor. But while ſhe was contemplating his aged form, bent on the earth, his hands claſped, and eyes lifted towards heaven with a fervency of devotion ſhe had hardly ever obſerved, ideas ſtruck her that by no means contributed to inſpire that fortitude ſhe ſo much wiſhed at this critical hour to poſſeſs.

That very figure which ſhe now ſo much admired, nay, almoſt revered and loved, might have been an aſſiſtant in taking away the life of her father!——and thoſe very hands which ſhe ſaw extended in the pious action of prayer, might have inflicted tortures on her parent!

"Horrid ideas!—uncharitable conſideration!" exclaimed a voice which ſeemed to paſs by her, in a whiſper.

Matilda ſtarted at the rebuke: but ſhe had not even breathed her thoughts: ſhe was therefore certain it muſt be ſomething more than mortal. Heaven itſelf had chid her for the ſuppoſition.

Trembling

Trembling at the thought, ſhe ſupported herſelf againſt the ſide of the cave, and ſtood an object of diſtreſs and terror.——At length, being in ſome degree recovered, ſhe ſtepped forward, and gaſping with anxiety, appeared before the aſtoniſhed hermit. His ſurpriſe may be well conceived; and with accents of aſtoniſhment, nor by any means free from horror, he aſked her buſineſs at this unuſual hour. Matilda had now partly recovered her ſcattered ſenſes, and with a dignity and fortitude of air peculiar to herſelf, requeſted his pardon for diſturbing him at his devotions, and then begged him to liſten with attention to a few circumſtances ſhe had to relate.

Father Peter looked at her with a piercing eye.——Both being ſeated, and the hermit having trimmed his lamp, Matilda thus addreſſed him:—

"Picture to yourſelf, father, a daughter, who never experienced the embrace of paternal love, but who was yet taught to revere the name of a parent, though her eyes were never bleſſed with one glance of rapture on his countenance.

"Brought up with all the tenderneſs a fond mother can conceive for her fatherleſs children, —their unprotected ſtate ſtill more endearing them to her maternal boſom,—ſhe feels but little the loſs ſhe had ſuſtained, in the comfort and happineſs of this remaining tie of duty and parental affection. Now then," continued Matilda, burſting into tears, "change this ſcene of earthly

bliſs,

bliſs, and obſerve her on the couch of ſickneſs, claſping the hand of her child with looks—Oh! merciful God! ſuch looks as I cannot deſcribe, nor you conceive."

She turned towards her aged auditor: the drops of ſympathy trickled down his faded cheeks while he begged her to be compoſed, and continue her narrative.

"Her countenance, raiſed towards heaven, brightened at the very thought of thoſe glorious realms; and a chriſtian's expectation beamed in her eye; yet when ſhe turned towards her daughter, tears would again burſt forth, and ſhe would claſp to her heaving breaſt the weeping child, as if afraid to leave her in a world, encircled with horrid guilt, and eternal deſtruction. She doubted not the goodneſs of her God; her faith was great, but yet her feelings could not be ſubdued.—She died; and if a good life procures a place of grace,—wafted by heavenly angels, ſhe reached the boſom of a merciful Redeemer.

"Now, father, behold the clouds of adverſity gathering over the heads of her offspring; the brother petitions a noble relation of his mother to receive a ſiſter to his care, for no pecuniary advantage, but to ſhield her from inſults to which her age and ſex, added to the unprotected ſtate ſhe was left in, every day ſubjected her.—The only anſwer they obtain is a direct denial from an artful prieſt, who by his perfidious arguments had poiſoned his patron's mind againſt the children

dren of a daughter whom he had before forſaken when he had no adviſer but a bad heart.

"They leave their native country, to accept the invitation of a diſtant relation in a foreign clime, where an aſylum was yet hoped to be gained for the female wanderer, while her brother fought againſt the enemies of his country. Arrived at the principal city of England, they are plunged into diſſipation, ſurrounded by temptation, and forſaken by thoſe who ſhould have protected them againſt oppreſſion.——Picture to yourſelf a villain, a daſtardly villain, taking advantage of the neglect ſhown to the female relation of his friend, and, at a moment when he thought himſelf free from moleſtation, employing even force to cruſh her to the earth, and blaſt her future days with ſhame and ſorrow never to be eraſed.——Her brother, witneſs to the ſufferings and uſage of a ſiſter, who, he knew, had no other friend to guard her from a wretch unworthy to bear the image of his Creator, ſeizes the villain, who attempts to take his life; but the raſh, though excuſable, injured youth ſtrikes him to the ground, weltering in his blood, and momentarily expecting to pay that debt to nature, at the receival of which he had nothing to hope, but much to fear. They fly from the laws of England, return to their native land, ſhrinking from notice, fearful that the power of their oppreſſor may overtake them even there. Another heavy misfortune now ſurrounds them; through the curſed contrivance of their enemies, the young officer

officer is proved a deſerter, by not attending to an order which was ſent to him the night he left London, and of which conſequently he was entirely ignorant. By the death of him whom he had wounded, it is rendered impoſſible for him to clear himſelf of this ſtigma. Concealed in a deſolate habitation, they diſcover the murder,—— ah! and the murderer, of their father!"

Matilda turned towards the hermit. His colour changed, and he gazed at her with ſilent awe and aſtoniſhment.

She continued——"Yet a witneſs muſt be found to authenticate the horrid deed, and give juſtice to the children of the deceaſed."

"And is ſuch a perſon living?" aſked Father Peter.

"He is," returned Matilda.—"Were you in his ſituation, would you not promote that juſtice which God and nature require? or would you ſtill ſcreen the wretch, and ſuffer the innocent victims of his cruelty to languiſh in diſtreſs and affliction?"

"Surely you cannot doubt my anſwer," ſaid the hermit. "I would even part with life itſelf to procure juſtice for the ſufferers you mention."

"There is no need of ſuch a ſacrifice;" anſwered Matilda. "But now, father, I put your virtue to the trial. I come to demand reparation for the murder of a father, and that father the rightful heir of Orlando count Maſerini."

Father

Father Peter, though in a great degree aſtoniſhed, was not actually ſo ſurpriſed as might have been expected. He aſked an explanation.

"The account is brief.——In ſhort, Percival Maſerini was a priſoner in yonder abbey: you pitied him, yet were privy to the deed."

Father Peter ſeemed at a loſs to reply. At length he told her that at an early hour he would wait on her at the abbey.

"You know my reſidence then?" ſaid Matilda.

"Perfectly," anſwered he. "Believe me you ſhall have no cauſe to repent this viſit; and give me leave to foretell that the brighteſt ſcenes of happineſs, with the Almighty's permiſſion, now await you."

"There is comfort in your words, father," anſwered Matilda: "heaven ſend they may prove true! But the clouds of adverſity have ſo long eclipſed the cheering rays of hope, that I hardly feel myſelf able to admit them to my breaſt."

Father Peter wiſhed to ſee Matilda to the abbey-gates: but ſhe poſitively refuſed his offer, and parted with him at the entrance of the cave.

The idea of the funeral again entered her imagination; and ſhe felt a kind of dread at paſſing the ſepulchre, which almoſt made her repent that ſhe had refuſed the good old man's attenddance.

When

When ſhe had arrived within a few yards of it, ſhe perceived a glare of light which ſeemed to ſpread around the part, and ſoon obſerved ſeveral torches, the ſame as ſhe had before ſeen, ſtuck in the ground: the pedeſtal was alſo parted, and laid on the earth.

Matilda's agitation and ſurpriſe was greater than before; and ſhe ſtopped, unable to reſolve whether to paſs quickly by, or remain where ſhe was. While in this ſtate of ſuſpenſe, ſhe ſaw two men aſcend from the vault, followed by a third whoſe figure excited in her ſtill greater aſtoniſhment. He was elegantly formed, and his clothes were entirely of the Engliſh faſhion, but ſeemed ſtrangely put on: his hair was diſhevelled, and his whole frame ſeemed greatly diſordered.

After ſome little time they cloſed the pedeſtal, and taking up the torches, took that path which immediately led to the abbey.

Matilda was again at a loſs in what manner to act; but followed them, though at a diſtance, with ſlow and cautious ſteps. At length ſhe traced them to the gates of the abbey. Here they halted; and Matilda, with a palpitating heart, ſtopped alſo to obſerve their motions.

They continued in converſation ſome little time, when, to her amazement, they opened the outer gates, and entered.

Matilda, ſtill more alarmed, proceeded on, and ventured to paſs into the firſt court; ſhe here perceived no one; but having entered the hall, ſhe

ſhe thought ſhe heard voices in the parlour. Nor was her conjecture wrong: for having half aſcended the great ſtairs, ſhe liſtened for a moment, and heard a converſation carried on, though in a very low tone: ſhe however could plainly diſcover the ſpeech of Leonard and her brother; her fears therefore of a diſcovery being at an end, her curioſity did not prompt her to ſtay any longer, being much fatigued, and in want of reſt. She therefore directly proceeded to her chamber, and was happy to find Agnes ſtill under the influence of the ſleepy god.

CHAP.

## CHAP. VIII.

### MYSTERIES ELUCIDATED.

*We wiſh remov'd, what ſtandeth in our light,*
*And nature blame for limiting our ſight,*
*Where you ſtand wiſely winking, that the view*
*Of the fair proſpect may be always new.*

WALLER.

"FATHER of light! Almighty God Supreme, who, with an all-ſeeing eye ſurveyeſt the tranſactions of thy creatures here on earth, look down on one unworthy of thy goodneſs, though humbly ſoliciting thy aid,——who craves thy ſupport to ſee thoſe myſteries explained, the elucidation of which may ſtrike her ſoul with horror; but let thy heavenly aſſiſtance inſpire her with fortitude and reſignation, to liſten to the dictates of thy will!"

Such was the concluſion of Matilda's prayer, as ſhe retired to her pillow.

She enjoyed a calm and ſerene repoſe till a late hour in the morning, and found herſelf much refreſhed. Having deſcended to the parlour, neither Leonard, Agnes, nor her brother, had breakfaſted.

"I

"I am ſorry" ſaid ſhe, "to have made you wait: but this morning I have been uncommonly lazy."

"We have not waited for you alone," anſwered Alfred chearfully: "there is another perſon our gueſt to-day. In ſhort, you no doubt recollect, that, when you mentioned leaving the abbey, I told you a ſtranger would ſoon appear, to make you alter your reſolution. The time is now arrived that my prophecy is to be fulfilled, and the myſterious behaviour I have been guilty of, I hope, in ſome meaſure excuſed. Look at thoſe folding doors, Matilda: the ſight of them has at a former time occaſioned ſenſations of the utmoſt terror: do not, therefore, expect the entrance of a ghoſt, but a being of fleſh and blood. —Come forth!" cried he.

Matilda expected to ſee the venerable figure of father Peter.

The doors haſtily flew open, when, inſtead of the aged ſage, an elegant young man ſprang forth, and caught her in his arms. Matilda ſtarted back, and inſtantly exclaimed, "Mr. Milverne!"

"Not ſo," ſaid Alfred: "he does, I muſt confeſs, greatly reſemble that gentleman; but you now ſee before you Archibald lord Milverne."

"Do not believe him, charming Miſs Maſerini," anſwered the ſtranger. "I deny the title; let me only be known to you under the plain name of Milverne,—happy appellation,

under which I firſt became acquainted with the moſt charming of her ſex!"

Matilda was above the little arts of female coquetry, practiſed by the ſex in general; ſhe did not diſcourage either his lordſhip's hopes or addreſſes; and after ſome little time ſpent in mutual inquiries, they ſeated themſelves at the breakfaſt-table.

Leonard and Agnes wiſhed to have taken their meal afterwards, out of reſpect to lord Milverne; but his noble ſoul ſcorned the empty title he poſſeſſed, and conſidered it of no other conſequence, than a more than uſual call upon him to act through life with honour and integrity, as an example to thoſe in a lower ſphere, who had never received the advantages of a good education, or the rudiments of virtue from honeſt and reſpectable parents.

He inſiſted that no unuſual ceremony ſhould be obſerved on his account; and his requeſt was complied with. Matilda received the pleaſing intelligence that count D'Ollifont was yet living, and that the news they had received of his death, was merely of his own contrivance, executed by his creatures in France; and that there was not a doubt but the cruel proceeding of proving Alfred Maſerini a deſerter, was alſo effected by ſchemes of villany from the ſame quarter.

Lord Milverne acquainted them that the laſt intelligence he received of the count, was that he had been ſome little time at Paris, but that his popularity in that city was greatly decreaſed, on

the

the diſcovery of an aſſaſſination he was proved to be the author of, and muſt certainly have ſuffered for the crime, had he not been ſcreened by royal power.

" I ſhall now," continued his lordſhip, " acquaint you with my adventures ſince you left England, till a certain event happened, which will cloſe my narrative, and give room for one to be related by my friend here," (pointing to Alfred) " who will then have an opportunity of clearing up his own conduct ſo as entirely to obliterate every ſuſpicion of unkindneſs to a ſiſter, who has ſhown the moſt noble heart, and affection for her brother, in her fortitude and generous behaviour through his misfortune."

Here he bowed to Matilda.

" On the night of the maſquerade, I had not long forced Mr. Maſerini into the coach, when a crowd of people began to aſſemble, collected by the repeated cries of ' murder !' from the count's ſervants, who kept me in hold. I was immediately delivered into the hands of the watchmen, and two conſtables, who had by this time arrived, charged with having favoured the eſcape of the murderer. I was directly taken to a watch-houſe near, but was ſoon admitted to find bail for my appearance, when they were informed who I was.

" The next morning I appeared before a magiſtrate: my perſon and name were ſoon recogniſed by that gentleman, who had been acquainted with my family. To him and the perſons

aſſembled, I related the whole affair; and made it clear that the ſecond piſtol was fired for defence, as the count firſt diſcharged his. In ſhort, D'Ollifont's conduct appeared in the moſt black and infamous colours, and I was honourably diſcharged. He continued for ſome time in a dangerous ſtate: at times he was inſane; and when thoſe fits came on, it was his deſire, in his lucid intervals, that no one ſhould attend him but his confidential ſervant and ſteward, Rabourn.

"The news of this ſhameful ungenerous tranſaction of the count's was the general talk of the town; and moſt people allowed that puniſhment had fallen on the right perſon.

"As ſoon as I had ſettled ſome buſineſs of conſequence in London, I immediately ſet off for France, on my way towards Italy; two ſtrong reaſons urging me to take the journey,—one to ſee a dying father, who, by letters I underſtood, laboured under a ſevere indiſpoſition, which increaſed upon him daily;—the other, the hopes of finding ſome exiled friends, whoſe ſituation I greatly pitied and lamented.

"The firſt news I heard when I arrived at Paris, was the death of my parent, and that Mr. Maſerini was declared a deſerter, for not attending to an order left at his lodgings the very night he departed from London. I made it my buſineſs to obtain an immediate audience with two of his majeſty's miniſters; and though I clearly explained the miſtake, was unable to procure any redreſs

redreſs. It was an order (they ſaid) by the royal command, and could not be reſcinded.

" Finding it was in vain to take any more trouble at court, I proceeded directly towards the Alps, and ſtopped at the very houſe where lady Caroline Albourne had been ſaved from the fire, ——as I ſuppoſed, by you. I immediately croſſed the mountains, and ſoon found myſelf in this country. I directly proceeded to the reſidence of my late father, which was now inhabited by a friend who had accompanied him hither, and his domeſtics. His will was produced; and I found myſelf poſſeſſed of eight thouſand a year, except a few legacies, a genteel annuity ſettled on the perſon before mentioned, and handſome preſents to all his ſervants.

" All my affairs being ſettled in a ſhort ſpace of time, I made every cautious inquiry concerning you; but all proved abortive; and I was ſtill more perplexed, as you mentioned no particular place you intended to travel to, in anſwer to the letter I ſent to Dover, though it was my earneſt requeſt. This, however, I conſidered as the effect of the hurry and diſtreſs you were then in. An idea at laſt ſtruck me, that I had heard ſay Graſville Abbey was the reſidence of your anceſtors. I had often heard talk of the venerable pile, when in Italy before, and now determined to viſit it,—conceiving that you might be there concealed. I immediately ſet out for Montferrat, taking with me only one ſervant; and, after two days' journey, we found ourſelves near this

gothic

gothic manſion. It grew dark; but I reſolved to ſee the external part before I ſlept; we at length entered the thick wood on the left ſide of the building. Its lofty towers began to appear above the gloomy dark foliage, and the riſing moon ſhone in full ſplendour on its grey decayed walls. I ſtood ſtill ſome time to admire the awful and beautiful ſcene before me; after which I reſolved to have a nearer view of the abbey. My ſervant now attempted to diſſuade me from my reſolution.

"My lord," ſaid he, 'we were told at the inn we laſt ſtopped at, that this wood was infeſted by banditti:—for heaven's ſake do not venture farther.'

"I laughed at the poor fellow's fears, and conſidered the report as merely the conſequence of no perſon daring to go near the abbey. I therefore inſiſted on riding forward; and we proceeded into the very heart of the wood, when I began to be rather alarmed myſelf: for the moon being obſcured by heavy clouds, its intricacies became ſo great, that I could not find the path we had firſt followed.

"We had not continued in this ſituation above a quarter of an hour, when we perceived two two men approach, whoſe appearance gave ſome reaſons for apprehenſion. They were armed, and we alſo had weapons of defence. At length they accoſted us; and by the manner of their addreſs, we found they were robbers. Having aſked a few frivolous queſtions, they began to

uſe

uſe rough language, and told us we muſt go no further, for that we were their priſoners.——But our number being equal, I reſolved not tamely to ſubmit; and giving my man the hint, he engaged with one, while I undertook the other. Each of the party fired a piſtol, but not one fell; when one of the men whiſtled aloud, and in leſs than three minutes we were ſurrounded by a party of the banditti. Having diſarmed us, and taken all our money, they led us in a kind of triumph ſtill further into the wood, till we arrived at the opening of a large cave.

" The robbers having knocked at a heavy door almoſt concealed by trees, it was opened by a youth, ſeemingly not above fourteen, who conducted us, by the light of a lamp, down a ſteep deſcent, which gradually became wider, and terminated in a large ſpace partitioned into ſeveral apartments. In one of the largeſt a cloth was ſpread for ſupper, and an elderly man ſtood cooking of it in another room. ' Joſcelin,' ſaid the leader of the party, ' ſecure theſe priſoners; but mind that they are uſed well, and give them a hot ſupper.'——' Signor,' continued he, turning to me, ' your ſituation is not ſo bad as you may ſuppoſe: if you are not refractory, we ſhall be moderate.'—Joſcelin conducted us to the further part of the cave, and placed us in a ſmall but clean chamber, in which was a good bed. Felix, my ſervant, now began to rub his hands with pleaſure, and ſtrove to communicate that comfort to me, which he derived from the idea of having a good

a good lodging and ſupper, inſtead of a ſpeedy death. But my diſtreſs was not ſo eaſily to be alleviated. I was now confined, I knew not for how long, from the ſight of all I held moſt dear;" (His lordſhip looked moſt tenderly at Matilda) "and I conſidered that death itſelf would have been more welcome than ſuch an untimely delay. I could, however, blame nothing but my own raſhneſs, and conſequently endeavoured to ſupport my miſchance with as much philoſophy as poſſible.

"Supper was brought us, and although I had no appetite, I taſted of it: but Felix took care to make up for my deficiency in point of eating.

"I had but little ſleep that night, and roſe in the morning very unwell. Breakfaſt was brought us early; and while I was expecting what would be the iſſue of this ſtrange treatment from men whoſe behaviour I expected to find quite different, our attendant, after a few hems, thus addreſſed us:—

'As you are two perſons whoſe courage and manners I much admire, I ſhall entirely deviate from the regular rules of our ſociety, and even put myſelf in your power, by acquainting you with circumſtances, which, were it known I related, death muſt be my reward.'

"Having thanked him as well as my ſurpriſe would let me, he continued:—

'One moon has nearly paſſed, ſince we loſt two brothers of our order, which accordingly now wants

wants that number to make it complete. It is our uſual cuſtom, after ſuch events, to ſeize on the firſt travellers who fall in our way; and that lot has happened to you; and you are in conſequence now treated in our cuſtomary manner, which I am ſure you have no reaſon to complain of. An offer is always made to the perſons thus taken, to accept the vacant places of our ſociety, and live with us after the uſual method of the brotherhood. You will both of you ſhortly receive ſuch propoſals: and though no compulſion may appear in them, yet, mark me, certain death is the conſequence of a refuſal. We never chuſe to enter any one actually againſt his will, as treachery may be the reſult of ſuch a choice. If it is therefore found that your inclinations are not agreeable to our wiſhes, you are both certain to fall victims. Do not diſcover the information I have given you of our proceedings, as in that caſe I muſt, as I before told you, become a ſacrifice to my good-will to you. Be cautious, therefore; maturely deliberate on your ſituation;—profit by the intelligence I have communicated; nor idly throw away your lives, when you have it in your power to preſerve them.'

"Picture to yourſelves my ſituation, after having heard the information of the friendly robber; forced, as I may ſay, either to follow a life of depredation and villany, or fall a ſacrifice to a ſet of wretches who, I had now every reaſon to ſuppoſe, were deſtitute of even the common feelings of humanity.—I had hardly time for this reflection,

before the captain of the banditti entered, and preſented me with the propoſals, the contents of which I knew too well; and having deſired me to peruſe them, left us alone, yet not without mentioning that he ſhould call again in the evening to receive our anſwers to the offers which we ſhould find ſet before us.

"I was unable to read the deteſted paper; but after ſome little time Felix rehearſed it aloud, and I liſtened with attention.——It declared that we ſhould ſhare equally in the profits ariſing from adventures, though every one muſt take his ſhare in the danger, and pay implicit obedience to the captain or leader of the company.

"Never," I exclaimed, "will I ſubmit to the infamous meaſures of this ſhameful crew; inſtantaneous death is far preferable to the languiſhing life of miſery I muſt here endure, fruſtrated in all thoſe ſchemes of happineſs I had planned to enjoy within a few weeks."

"Alas! ſir," anſwered Felix, "I have always been taught, that diſappointments are for our good: and if we really conſider them as the acts of a Supreme Being, how can they be bad?—— Why ſhould we then throw away our lives, and yield them up to men whom we deſpiſe, when we may perhaps, by retaining them, recover our liberties, with thoſe bleſſings we before had in contemplation?"

"I muſt confeſs, the argument of the poor humble Felix brought a bluſh into the face of his maſter.

maſter.—'That man,' thought I, 'without the advantages of a refined or liberal education, can give inſtruction to me, who have had every advantage in point of learning,—as well as an example, to teach me fortitude, philoſophy, and reſignation to the divine will.'—His words made ſuch an impreſſion on my diſordered imagination, that I reſolved at once to ſubmit to the terms of the banditti, in ſuch a manner as ſhould give them no room to doubt of my attachment to their cauſe; as in this caſe more opportunities might offer, to releaſe us from ſo horrid a confinement.—The captain at night again viſited us; and both Felix and myſelf teſtified the greateſt happineſs to accept of the offer; and the better to give reaſons for our readineſs to comply, we gave him to underſtand we were men of deſperate character, who knew no way of living, but by the aid of the riches of others: 'and for thoſe purpoſes,' ſaid I, 'we take it by turns to act as ſervant, and through this means have accompliſhed many ſchemes productive of profit, which at ſome other time I will relate to you.'—Garbardo (for that was the leader's name) ſeemed highly pleaſed with our willingneſs, and the account we gave him of our characters; in ſhort, he determined that we ſhould be entered into the order that very evening. Accordingly, the whole party were called to aſſemble; and, after undergoing the uſual forms, we received the dreſs and arms of the two deceaſed robbers; we were then congratulated,

under

under the feigned names we had given them, as brothers of the ſociety.

"We ſoon found the good effects of conforming to their will with a ſeeming degree of pleaſure; for they ſo far relaxed from their uſual methods, as to permit us to ſleep together. One rule, however, they ſtrictly adhered to; for we were not ſuffered to go out of the cave together upon any occaſion, and were given to underſtand that he who remained behind was a kind of hoſtage for the other.

"It was a general cuſtom for three to go together to purchaſe proviſion, which was procured from a man who kept a kind of ſhop on the ſkirts of the wood. He was well acquainted with the gang, and proved grateful for their cuſtom, by providing them with the beſt food, and keeping their ſituation an entire ſecret. The place was hardly ever intruded upon by any but the banditti: ſo retired was the ſpot where it ſtood.

"It came to Felix's turn to go firſt to the victualling booth; nothing, however, offered, to improve the liberty of leaving the cave; and he was accompanied by two ſtaunch friends to the ſociety.——Nor did my journey prove more ſucceſsful; and I returned in ſome meaſure in deſpair of ever finding means to eſcape.

"Felix was again my comforter, and inſpired me with hopes that at another time we might meet with more fortunate circumſtances which might

might enable us to obtain a releaſe from theſe heavy chains of ſlavery.

"The next day when Felix walked to the wood, he returned with a pleaſure in his countenance, which, I could plainly perceive, ſhowed he had met with ſome pleaſant adventure; nor was my conjecture wrong: for when I eagerly inquired of him, the firſt opportunity, if he had any good news, he informed me, to my great ſatisfaction, it was no other than that he had ſeen Leonard at the place where he had been. 'Nor did either of us,' continued Felix, 'fooliſhly diſcover our joy at meeting one another, as you might have ſuppoſed; but he, ſeeing in what company I was, acted with the greateſt caution. I, however, found means to whiſper to him, unſeen, that on ſuch a day he would ſee you at the ſame place.'—This relation, though for the moment it inſpired me with a kind of joy, yet was but a poor preface to any ideas of liberty. I determined, however, to make the moſt of it; and accordingly, during the interval of time, I wrote, in a letter, a detail of the circumſtances that had involved me in a ſituation, of which I gave the deſcription. This I ſealed up, and put in my pocket, ready to ſlip into Leonard's hand, when I ſaw him.

"I viſited, as uſual, the place, attended by two men, and in one corner of the ſhop ſaw Leonard, as I expected.——I found means to convey the paper

paper unperceived into his hand, and thus returned with ſome degree of comfort to the cave.

"I muſt now," continued his lordſhip, "give up my narrative, and reſign, as I before informed you, the taſk to Mr. Maſerini."

CHAP.

## CHAP. IX.

TO lord Milverne's concluding words Alfred replied——"I own, my lord, I feel conſiderable pleaſure in undertaking the taſk you have impoſed on me, as I ſhall now have an opportunity of explaining to Matilda my reaſons for that myſterious behaviour which carried in it a ſtrong reſemblance to unkindneſs, though I had her intereſt and happineſs in view.

"I ſhall therefore begin from the firſt appearance of that gloom and uneaſineſs which ſeemed almoſt to cruſh every pleaſing quality, and give a kind of moroſe turn to my temper and manners, doubtleſs, diſguſting.

"It was, I believe, the ſecond day after our arrival at the abbey, that Leonard was diſpatched to procure proviſion from the public market, and ſet off accordingly. At his return, you, no doubt, recollect, he deſired to ſpeak with me alone.—— The ſubject he had to communicate, was his having ſeen Felix at the place where he had ſtopped, which was (as he deſcribed it) extremely retired, and conſequently ſuited well his purpoſe on that account.—He gave a deſcription of the perſons who were with him, and of the dreſſes they wore,

wore, which confirmed them in my opinion to be banditti.

" What to make of this adventure, I knew not, and was ſtill more aſtoniſhed when Leonard informed me Felix had whiſpered in his ear, that, if he attended at the place the next day but one, he would ſee his maſter there.—This intelligence, as you may ſuppoſe, cauſed in me the greateſt alarm for the fate of Mr. Milverne. By the accounts I had heard before of the banditti in theſe parts, I conjectured he was confined by them, as he really was. To the uncomfortable ſenſation which this information gave me before, the next moment was added another cauſe for horror, amazement, and, I may ſay, diſtreſs.—The caſement in my chamber above ſtands oppoſite my bed; as I lay upon it, I could plainly perceive part of the weſt tower; nor had I retired above an hour, before I obſerved a ſtrong light in one of the windows; —and awaking Leonard, he plainly ſaw it as well as myſelf. I determined, however, to mention nothing of this circumſtance, or that relative to Mr. Milverne; and he had my orders accordingly.

" Can you, Matilda, blame me for this ſecreſy?—I well knew the ſituation of your heart, and was certain the information of either of theſe circumſtances muſt have conſiderably heightened that anxiety and miſery which you then laboured under.—This may account for my

my melancholy the next day. The uneaſineſs you, no doubt, obſerved, when you propoſed being of the party to ſearch the rooms in the weſt tower, and alſo on our conference together afterwards, when we conſulted how we ſhould act concerning Mr. Milverne. We alſo, after having retired to our chamber, ſpent the beſt part of the night in converſation on that, and the light we had ſeen."

Matilda well recollected that night, which was the ſame when ſhe liſtened at her brother's chamber door, and was ſo alarmed at the incoherent ſentences ſhe heard.—She forbore, however, to interrupt her brother.

"We alſo watched again for the light, and ſaw it; when, who can expreſs our aſtoniſhment at plainly perceiving a figure paſs backwards and forwards, which at laſt ſeemed to vaniſh with it?

"Leonard, according to the appointment he had received from Felix, ſet off again for the market, as we informed you, to procure wine,—the bottles we had before, being broken while he was gone. You queſtioned me on the ſtrange alteration in my ſpirits and behaviour, and wiſhed much to be acquainted with the cauſe of the change; which information I refuſed, though I told you I had reaſons for the greateſt uneaſineſs."

"Leonard returned, and (as you no doubt well recollect) with the news of count D'Olli-

font's

ſont's death, and the ſearch that was making after me, both in France and Italy.—Leonard then aſked to ſpeak with me alone: he informed me he had really ſeen Mr. Milverne and two other perſons, all dreſſed in the ſame manner as the former ones, and that Mr. Milverne had ſlipped a letter into his hand unperceived. This he gave to me, and I eagerly opened and read it. All my fears for Mr. Milverne were realiſed; and I found his ſituation, by his own deſcription, to be juſt what I expected. In ſhort, this intelligence, added to what I had ſeen the night before,—the idea of the count's death, and my own ſituation,—drove me almoſt to diſtraction, as my behaviour plainly ſhowed. I drank freely at ſupper; and you muſt remember my frantic expreſſions, occaſioned by the fumes of wine, and a diſtreſſed imagination.

"We heard a groan from thoſe folding doors: I immediately ran to them: Leonard was unable to hold me back, but followed me. I puſhed them open, and ſaw, by the means of a flaſh of lightning, a figure, of a deadly pale, ſtand in the centre of the apartment. The ſight of it was but momentary; for all again being dark, except from the lights in this room, it ſeemed to vaniſh at the further end.—Leonard, who was cloſe to me, likewiſe ſaw the ſame; and it was this which occaſioned thoſe exclamations of horror, which, we thought, your inſenſibility had prevented you from hearing.

"I found

" I found myſelf, however, greatly miſtaken, when Leonard informed me, the next day but one, that you had queſtioned him on the ſubject. —I now told him, if you made any further inquiries, to ſay that I had given him the moſt poſitive orders to be ſilent on the topic. Lord Milverne had mentioned in his letter, that, through a fortunate and unforeſeen circumſtance, Felix would be again at the ſame place the next day: he alſo hinted he had faint hopes of gaining over two of the banditti to his intereſt.

" Accordingly, the following day, in the afternoon, the time appointed, Leonard ſet off, and found Felix, as he expected, with two others. They exchanged notes without being perceived; but Leonard could obſerve the maſter of the ſhop, and the two men, ſeemed to wonder, by their looks, at ſeeing him juſt at the time of their arrival.—I had ordered him to read the letter before he returned to the abbey, that if it was neceſſary to procure any articles more than what we had got, he might purchaſe them, and bring them with him:— he did ſo, and they were carried unopened to my chamber. I was ſurpriſed to find a dark lantern, ſome wine, and eatables.—The letter, however, which he gave me, ſoon explained this: his lordſhip informed me in it, that he had brought over two of the men entirely to his wiſhes, who had led that way of life but a

ſhort

ſhort time, and who entered into it as the only means to avoid ſtarving. Being informed by him, it was in his power to make them comfortable for life, could they aid his eſcape, they had both ſworn to ſerve him to the utmoſt of their power. He added, that one of theſe men and Felix would be at the abbey gates a little before midnight; Felix being, for the firſt time, ſuffered to go out in ſearch of adventures with this man.—The meaning of this viſit was to conſult on the moſt likely ſcheme of eſcaping from the robbers, as too frequent attendance at the market might excite their ſuſpicion.

"I muſt own I was not by any means pleaſed with this plan: I conſidered that theſe two men might act in this manner merely to fathom the inclinations of their new brother; and, in that caſe, our reſidence would be diſcovered to the villains alſo. There was now, however, no alternative; and Leonard attended at the outſide gates exactly to the time."

Matilda here well recollected the ſurpriſe and terror ſhe had ſuffered at ſeeing them enter the court, while ſhe was watching for the light in the weſt tower.

"He having conducted them to the parlour, I deſcended; and we began a conſultation on the moſt probable means of effecting lord Milverne's eſcape from the banditti. Nothing that was propoſed ſeemed to carry with it hopes of ſucceſs, owing to the vigilance of the robbers, who,

who, as was before obſerved, detained one as a hoſtage for the return of the other.—In ſhort, we were not able to come to any determination; and our little party broke up without having agreed on any plan whatever.—Leonard again conducted them out of the abbey, and we retired to our beds.

" The following day but one, you queſtioned Leonard again; and, according to my orders, he gave no ſatisfactory anſwer, but was greatly ſurpriſed to hear your determination of leaving the abbey.—This he communicated to me; and you, no doubt, well remember our converſation on the ſubject, which ended with your conſenting to continue a fortnight longer: and, if the myſteries were not explained in that interval, you were immediately to repair to the convent of N*** in France.—I mentioned the appearance of another perſon, to make you alter your reſolution,—hoping by that time to have invented ſome contrivance for the releaſe of lord Milverne.

" Leonard had, during this time, brought me word that the ſame viſit would be repeated at the abbey again at midnight.—They were punctual at the hour; and he accordingly conducted them to the parlour, where I again attended.

" The only method that could now be thought of, was by the application of an herb, which, if taken to a certain quantity, would occaſion

occaſion a death-like ſleep, and was ſimilar to the Turkiſh poppies, though the juice was not of ſo dangerous a nature.—This idea was ſuggeſted by Uloff, the robber who accompanied Felix. He obſerved the root might be eaſily procured, and that, by the help of a little art, and this properly applied, the robbers might be led to believe lord Milverne dead; which would at once effect his eſcape: for it was a general rule among the banditti, to inter one another immediately in a vault which ſtood near their cave,—from which he might with eaſe extricate himſelf, the coffins never being faſtened down.

"Strange as this thought was, there ſeemed no other more likely to ſucceed; and I found that his lordſhip had agreed to carry this plan into execution, provided it met with our approbation, and Leonard could procure the herb.

"As Leonard was conducting them acroſs the court when leaving the abbey, the figure again appeared in the weſt tower; which greatly aſtoniſhed them all.

"The next morning you informed me of the human form and lamp which you had ſeen reflected in the glaſs that ſtood in your chamber. This account, added to the ſtrange voice which we both heard, made me to reſolve to watch in the weſt tower; which accordingly I did.

"The ſame night, Felix and three others of the banditti (they having brought over one more

to

to their intereſt) came to the abbey, unknown to either Leonard or me, to ſee if we had got the herb, as they were in hopes the next day to have a good opportunity of carrying their ſcheme into execution. They knocked at the outer gate, then burſt it open, and proceeded directly to the parlour.——Theſe were the perſons whom we miſtook for the officers of juſtice, as their arrival was entirely unexpected, and neither Leonard nor myſelf had a ſight of them.——Their intentions, therefore, proved fruitleſs; and they left the abbey, unable to find us.

The next day Leonard attended at the place of rendezvous, and found Felix, who communicated to him their adventures the night before; and, having given him the herb, Leonard underſtood they intended yeſterday for the trial of its effect.

" This was accordingly done; and by the effects of it, and the help of Felix and his aſſiſtants, his lordſhip was ſhown to the whole of the banditti as a corpſe.——A coffin was therefore prepared, and, in the evening, he was conveyed to the pedeſtal, and buried with the uſual ceremony; one of the robbers being habited like a monk."

The myſtery of the ſtrange funeral which Matilda ſaw was now entirely elucidated.—Her brother continued——

" After the interment, the company returned to the cave; but Felix and one of the robbers were fixed on to go in ſearch of adventures.——

They

They immediately, therefore, repaired to the vault, and conducted lord Milverne here; after which both joined their comrades as uſual.—But his lordſhip means to go to-day to a principal magiſtrate ſome few miles from hence, and give an account of theſe depredators on the public. The whole of them will conſequently be ſeized; when Felix and the three converts to their cauſe will be ſelected from the banditti, and the remainder left to take the due courſe of the law."

Thus Alfred Maſerini ended his narrative. But, though Matilda had heard many circumſtances of a ſtrange nature explained, which had cauſed her conſiderable uneaſineſs, yet nothing had been ſaid to clear up, in a ſatisfactory manner, thoſe aſtoniſhing events which ſeemed in every degree to confirm the report of the abbey being haunted.

Theſe ideas had not croſſed her mind but a few minutes before Alfred informed her that there was yet another tale to be related by one whom he expected every moment:—"And I am certain," continued he, "that his ſtory will clear away every miſt of doubtful horror concerning this building, and obliterate every ſuperſtitious thought, by a clear elucidation of the myſteries that encompaſs it."

In about a quarter of an hour the folding doors again opened, and father Peter ſtood before them. ——Agnes, Matilda, and even Leonard and lord Milverne, were aſtoniſhed how he could enter from that part.

"According

"According to my promiſe laſt night," ſaid the hermit, addreſſing himſelf to Matilda, "I now, as you perceive, attend you here, fair lady."

Alfred's countenance was transformed to the gaze of ſurpriſe.——"I find," ſaid he, ſmiling, to his ſiſter, "we have alſo to expect explanations from you, Matilda."

"Indeed," anſwered ſhe, "the taſk is ſoon performed."

She then related to them her finding the manuſcript, and her journey on that account to father Peter's cave, with the reaſons for not giving it her brother the next morning.

Alfred's and the hermit's countenances glowed with pleaſure at the mention of ſuch a paper having been found.

"No doubt," exclaimed the latter, "this will be a principal proof againſt the murderer of your father."

Matilda immediately produced it, and it was read by Lord Milverne aloud.——It is impoſſible to deſcribe the emotions of Alfred Maſerini, as he liſtened to the diſtracted words of his wretched parent: ſuffice it to ſay, they were equal to his ſiſter's at her firſt peruſal of the parchment.

The party being in ſome meaſure compoſed, father Peter was requeſted by Alfred to relate thoſe circumſtances concerning Graſville Abbey, which had for years occaſioned the moſt horrid reports to be ſpread, and worked with terrific ſenſations on the feelings even of thoſe whoſe

good ſenſe had before taught them to deſpiſe every ſuperſtitious idea.

"I ſhall, by your leave," anſwered the old man, "begin from the moſt early period of my life, and proceed gradually through every event; which will all tend to ſhow, that, however ſtrange the ways of Providence may appear to mortal eyes, yet in a due courſe of time they will be productive of the greateſt happineſs and good to thoſe who are deſerving the protection of the Supreme Being."

All being ſeated, liſtened with attention to the venerable ſpeaker.

## CHAP. X.

### ELUCIDATIONS CONTINUED.

*———Something I'd unfold;*
*——— for ſomething ſtill there lies*
*In heaven's dark volume, which I read through miſts.*

DRYD. ŒDIP.

*Good unexpected, evil unforeſeen,*
*Appear by turns, as fortune ſhifts the ſcene:*
*Some, rais'd aloft, come tumbling down amain,*
*Then fall ſo hard, they bound and riſe again.*

DRYD. VIRG.

### THE HERMIT'S TALE.

"BORN to a ſplendid fortune, and brought up in all the elegance of an Italian noble, I attained my nineteenth year.——My father, the baron Sampieno, was adviſed to ſend me to Madrid, not only to finiſh a particular part of my education, but for change of air, my health being in that ſtate which gave them ſerious alarm.

"At the ſeminary to which I was ſent, another young Italian, of my own age, was alſo placed by his friends.——His name was D'Ollifont: and our manners being greatly alike, gay, volatile, and diſſipated, it was not to be wondered at, that a conſiderable intimacy took place between us:——in ſhort, we plunged together into

every folly and vice which that gay and voluptuous city offered to our view; and, neither of us being under the ſtrict rules obſerved by the general ſcholars, we had greater opportunities to follow every wild inclination, and gratify every wiſh we could form.

" The conſequence of our raſh behaviour was a complaint of the governor's to each of our parents, which gave them the greateſt alarm and uneaſineſs.——A conſiderable decreaſe was, in conſequence, made in our allowances, and a ſevere reprimand ſent us, for conduct which threatened, in ſome degree, to bring diſgrace on our family. The reproof, though to both exceedingly mortifying, was not ſo diſtreſſing to us as the curtailment of our ſalaries, which would prevent our appearing among the extravagant ſociety we had become acquainted with, as we muſt be ridiculed by thoſe who had more to expend in the luxuries of the place.

" As I was ſitting, the day after I had received this information from Italy, meditating on my uncomfortable ſituation, D'Ollifont entered, and told me of his having received ſimilar intelligence.

" Do not give way to deſpair,' ſaid he; ' but let us take ſome method to overcome the misfortune.'

" I at firſt conceived he intended to write conciliatory letters of repentance,—and, I muſt own, my proud ſoul did not altogether approve ſuch a manner of proceeding; I therefore remained ſilent.

But

But he ſoon convinced me I had miſtaken his ideas, by informing me, in plain terms, he intended to commence gambler, and perſuading me to follow the ſame courſe.——'I have not a doubt," he continued, 'but I ſhall amply make amends for what I have loſt in my quarterly allowance."

"If I diſliked the idea of making conceſſion, how much more did I abhor the thought of entering into ſo mean and deſpicable a profeſſion as D'Ollifont had propoſed!—I was, indeed, greatly ſhocked to find that he had ſuch intentions.—— I expoſtulated with him, on the diſgrace, the infamy, of ſuch a character,—and attempted, to the utmoſt of my ability, to paint, in their true colours, the mean and pitiful ſhifts they were obliged to have recourſe to on many occaſions.— I was, however, diſappointed in my endeavours to alarm his pride, and make him give up ſo diſgraceful a determination. In ſhort, we parted in enmity.

"He ſoon after began this direct courſe to deſtruction, and in a little time became connected with a gang who were well known for the defrauds, of which they had been guilty. Neceſſity for the ſake of my own reputation, now obliged me to ſhun one whoſe principles and morals were univerſally known and condemned.—— The ſacrifice was greater than I expected; but at length, with ſome reſolution, I got the better of my feelings, and enjoyed conſiderable happineſs in the thought of the danger I had eſcaped.

"My

"My diſpoſition became now more ſettled, and my manners entirely changed, from the wild career of youth to the more thoughtful deportment of manhood.—The conſequence of this alteration was a thorough reconciliation with my friends, and a greater ſupply of money than I had ever received before.

"It is from this only that I can account for the deadly hate which took poſſeſſion of D'Ollifont, againſt one whom he had at a former period called his friend, and who ſtill would have done any thing in his power, to have reclaimed him from ſo contemptible a mode of living,—which it might now be properly called; his father having died, and left him but a ſmall legacy:—the bulk of his fortune he diſpoſed of to a diſtant relation.

"Not long after this event, I had the misfortune to loſe my parent, and, by his death, found myſelf in poſſeſſion of his title, and the whole of his property, which amounted to a conſiderable ſum,—there being no other children, and his wife having died when I was very young.

"My affections had for ſome time been fixed on a lovely object, who had reſided with her mother, near the academy where I was placed. Beauty was her leaſt ornament; an amiable diſpoſition, added to an excellent underſtanding, made her, in my eyes, an object worthy to be the wife of a man even in a higher

ſituation

ſituation than myſelf, though ſhe had no fortune.

" After an interval of a few months from my father's death, I had the exquiſite happineſs to receive my charming Caſſandra as my own. Spain was her native country; and, being unwilling to quit it, I reſolved to acquieſce with her deſire of ſettling there, as I had now no particular friends or relations in Italy.—Seventeen years were ſpent in a round of happineſs, which no mortal could enjoy in a greater degree than myſelf.—One girl and two boys were the fruits of our conſtant love; both of the latter died when infants, and the care of the education of the former was mine and my Caſſandra's chief employment.—I need not tell you how we loved her,—your own ideas muſt paint to you that affection which poſſeſſed our breaſts for this remaining pledge of our felicity,—when we ſaw in her every grace, and every virtue which could adorn a female.—Alas! thoſe ſcenes of bliſs were not to laſt for ever, but, after this period, were ſoon to be changed for miſery, anguiſh, and a ſeries of years clouded with glooms of ſorrow and adverſity, never to be eraſed."

The hermit ſhed a few tears at the recollection, and was under the neceſſity of pauſing for ſome minutes, to compoſe himſelf.

" I had never ſeen D'Ollifont from ſome little time before my marriage till the time I am ſpeaking of.—An interval of near eighteen years

years had elapſed: but yet his features were well known to me, though the greateſt alteration was viſible in his whole perſon.—I now beheld him in the utmoſt diſtreſs, having, as he ſaid, been obliged to fly from that part of Spain, where he had remained for a conſiderable time in the utmoſt diſgrace, and in a ſtate little better than ſtarving.—He related to me how truly he repented of the vicious life he had led, and that his only wiſh was now to procure, in ſome way, an honeſt ſubſiſtence by his own induſtry.—I immediately offered him my houſe, as an aſylum for the preſent, which he thankfully received, and lived with us after the manner of my own family.—During this time he behaved in a moſt pleaſing and inſinuative manner to all; and there was not even one in the family but greatly reſpected and admired D'Ollifont.

"I rejoiced much in the reformation that had been effected in him, and determined to ſpare no expenſe or intereſt in the procurement of an office for him, on the emoluments of which he might live comfortable and happy.

"Circumſtances continued in this ſituation for ſome little time; nor had any place become vacant, which I thought worthy to preſent to him: he, however, ſtill remained in my houſe, and every day gained more general eſteem.

"One evening, having walked in my garden rather later than uſual, I cut acroſs an unfrequented

quented path to my houſe:—on one ſide of it was a thick grove of trees, the foliage of which entirely prevented any thing from being ſeen behind.—It was a ſpot ſeldom intruded upon, inſomuch that in ſome parts it was nearly impaſſable.—I had got about the middle of this place, when I heard D'Ollifont's voice mention, with vehemence, the name of my daughter. Though rather ſurpriſed at his manner, yet it awakened in me no ſuſpicion; and I was juſt going to hail him, when words of a dreadful nature caught my ear.

"This night," ſaid he to the perſon who was with him, a man of infamous character, and who had formerly been his ſervant, 'muſt ſhe be ſecured.—You are ſure you well know the place?"

"Oh!" returned the other, 'let me alone for that!—and, egad! you have found out an excellent ſpot; for were the lady Lucretia's cries to be as loud as the town-bell, the devil take me if any one can hear her but thoſe who are with you!—You will excuſe me though, ſignor: but I think your manner of proceeding is ridiculous:—why not marry her? for then, ſome time or other, you may ſtand a chance to come in for ſome of the baron's money."

"Curſes on himſelf and money!' exclaimed the villain: 'I could have plundered him of that long ago; but the loſs of it, as I told you before, would not make him half miſerable

enough: it is revenge I thirſt for, not gain; nor have I ſo long played the hypocrite with him, but to invent ſome ſcheme that may at once blaſt his happineſs.—My hatred commenced againſt him when he ſhrunk from the propoſals I made, and turned ſage moraliſt: but it has, if poſſible, increaſed tenfold ſince I have ſeen him flouriſh, for years, in proſperity and honour, while I am doomed to live on the narrow limits of a ſmall income.—You may ſay he acts nobly now, and he has it in his power to be of conſiderable ſervice to me; but my proud ſoul is ready to burſt every hour I am looked on as a dependent on his bounty; and I am continually become more anxious to work his downfal.'

"I heard no more, but trembled with the emotions of horror and paſſion.—A wretch, whom I had ſheltered under my roof with the trueſt friendſhip,—to plan the diſhonour of my child, was too much!—I unfortunately had a loaded piſtol in my belt; and having torn away the boughs which parted us, I ſtood before the aſtoniſhed reptile.

"He trembled, and turned pale, as did Eburne, who was with him; but the recollection of the former ſtill remained, to invent one of the moſt damnable contrivances man could be the author of.

"Villain!' I exclaimed, and held the piſtol to his breaſt, 'doſt thou not deſerve to receive death

death at the hands of one whom, having the greateſt obligations to him, thou wouldſt cruſh to the earth,—and, fiend-like, grin at the miſery thou had brought upon himſelf and family?'

"During the time I uttered theſe words, a ſervant from the houſe appeared in ſight, though not near enough to hear what paſſed.

"I mean not,' I continued, ſeeing him ſhrink from me, 'to aſſaſſinate you.—Doubtleſs, you have weapons—ſtand, therefore, and defend yourſelf.'

"I have none,' he cried: 'my life is in your power.'

"Daſtardly wretch!' exclaimed I.

"At that moment the ſervant came up—he was ſent from the houſe to ſeek me.—Unfortunately, the laſt few words of D'Ollifont, with my anſwer, was the only part of the converſation he heard.—When, how was I aſtoniſhed, to hear D'Ollifont exclaim, 'I will die ſooner than commit ſuch a defraud,' at the ſame inſtant, producing a forged note on the bank of Venice.—'Here is a man' (ſaid he to the ſervant—pointing to Eburne) 'who can witneſs that your maſter juſt now threatened my life, unleſs I conſented to be a partner with him in paſſing theſe falſe notes.'

"It is difficult to ſay, which ſtood the greateſt ſtatue of ſurpriſe and horror,—the ſervant, or myſelf; and it is probable, had I not been prevented

vented by him, I ſhould have taken away my own life.

"Being at length more compoſed, I reproached D'Ollifont in the bittereſt terms for his perfidy, and walked forward to my houſe; but had not entered it above an hour before I found myſelf arreſted on his accuſation, and was that night, though all my friends interfered, dragged from my wife and child, to experience the miſeries of a gaol.

"Picture to yourſelf my ſituation—the night was ſpent in diſtracted ravings, and the morning brought a viſit from my Caſſandra and her daughter, which in ſome meaſure reſtored my ſcattered ſenſes; but it was only to experience pangs the moſt poignant and ſevere.

"D'Ollifont, and the wretch who was with him, ſwore to my having ſtopped the former in the private walk of my own garden, when by himſelf; Eburne being then at ſome diſtance, though near enough to obſerve all that paſſed:—that firſt, with fair words, I ſtrove to perſuade him to be an accomplice with myſelf in a forgery on the bank of Venice, and gave him a falſe bill, informing him that I had many more of the ſame ſort; but that, finding him continue obſtinate in his refuſal, I had proceeded to extremities,—and, placing a piſtol to his breaſt, threatened to deprive him of life, ſhould he refuſe:—that my intentions were fruſtrated by Eburne, who, hearing theſe words, immediately came forward.

"My

"My own ſervant was examined, and confeſſed, that, when at ſome diſtance, he ſaw me hold a piſtol to D'Ollifont's breaſt; and, at his arrival at the ſpot, heard him ſay he was unarmed;——and that I only anſwered, 'Daſtardly wretch!'

"It was now the general conjecture that this affair would touch my life; at all events I was doomed to a public trial.—It was in vain I pleaded my own tale, and the reaſons for my behaviour:—to every one, except thoſe to whom I was very well known, it carried in it ſomething romantic that D'Ollifont ſhould wiſh to debauch my daughter, which was ſure to end in his ruin, without even one chance to be benefited by the crime.

"During the interval between my impriſonment and the day of trial, D'Ollifont was ſent for to his relation, the count Maſerini, in Italy, whoſe health was in ſuch a ſtate that his life was even deſpaired of, owing to the falſe report of his children's death.—He returned, however, at the time my trial was expected to be brought on,—the poſſeſſor of his uncle's eſtates and wealth.

"In the time of his abſence from Spain, a number of falſe bills, the ſame as D'Ollifont had produced, were found, by the information of one of my own ſervants, buried in a ſmall cheſt, near a ſpot I uſed much to frequent in my garden: this freſh proof, which I had every reaſon to ſuppoſe to be planned by ſome ſcheme in which the villain Eburne was concerned,—and who, I have no doubt, bribed my ſervant, added greatly to the horrid

horrid accuſation againſt me.—I had, therefore, entirely made up my mind to expect no mercy, and reſolved to prepare myſelf in that manner which would give me a degree of fortitude in my laſt moments, that ſhould impreſs every one with ſome ideas of my innocence.

"The night preceding the awful day which was to decide my fate, my priſon-doors flew open, and count D'Ollifont ſtood before me.—He ſtarted back ſome ſteps, at my wretched appearance; and a convulſive trembling ſhowed that his conſcience touched him to the ſoul.

"I fixed my eyes on him with a look which ſeemed to add to his confuſion, and was going to upbraid him, when he interrupted me.—'Hold!' he cried: 'I have even a greater power over you than you ſuppoſe.—Laſt night your daughter attempted to plunge a poignard in my breaſt; and there is little doubt that a ſimilar ſentence to that which paſſes death upon you, will do the ſame by Lucretia.'

"I heard no more—but fainted before him.—The keeper of the priſon was called, and after ſome little time I recovered.——We were again left alone.

"D'Ollifont now told me there was yet one way to ſave both myſelf and child.——The conditions he propoſed were for me to go to Italy; and by a ſacred oath promiſe to perform ſome ſervices he ſhould have occaſion for.—'And I,' he continued, 'will ſwear, in the ſame manner, that

your

your family ſhall go with you, and your fortune in every reſpect be ſecured.'

" Was it true that my daughter had made an attempt upon his life, I was certain the laws of Spain muſt condemn her to death.—Had my own exiſtence been only at ſtake, it is probable I ſhould have ſcorned the villain's offer; knowing my Caſſandra and her child were provided for by money I had placed in the hands of a friend, ſo as to keep them above the frowns of fortune, in point of pecuniary concerns.——But the idea of my Lucretia being cut off by an ignominious death, occaſioned moſt probably by love for me, in her revenge againſt my bittereſt enemy, cut me to the ſoul; and almoſt any alternative would have been accepted to ſave her.——I demanded, however, the nature of thoſe ſervices, conceiving it might be ſome crime he dared not to undertake himſelf, and therefore had pitched on me to be the perpetrator of the deed.

" He ſwore, by the moſt ſacred oath, that my conjectures were ill-founded. Still my ſoul revolted at the idea of ſubmitting to the villain in ſo deſpicable a manner, which would in the general opinion give teſtimony of my guilt.——I refuſed the offer, and he left the apartment in a rage.——The next object which preſented itſelf was my wife in a ſtate of diſtraction; my child ——my Lucretia——was in the ſame priſon, and ſure to fall a victim to her raſhneſs!

" My ſituation was little ſhort of madneſs:—I raved: but it was uſeleſs, and could not ſave her.

her.—Yet a way had been ſhown me to preſerve her; and I had refuſed it. The keeper was called; I ſent him to D'Ollifont; the wretch appeared, and received, with a contemptuous ſmile, my acquieſcence to his propoſals."

CHAP.

## CHAP. XI.

"THE proceedings againſt me and Lucretia," continued the hermit, "were now immediately ſtopped.——I took the oath required:—no one was found to appear againſt us on the day of trial: and the ſame night I embraced my wife and daughter in my own houſe.

"But my joy at the event was conſiderably damped by the general behaviour of my acquaintance, who ſeemed to ſhun both myſelf and family:—in ſhort, it was plain that the method I had taken to evade public inveſtigation, was in ſome degree known; and, as I had before conceived, it was, in the common opinion, a confirmation of my conſcious guilt.——This, at leaſt, reconciled me to one circumſtance, which I was bound to perform—that of leaving Spain immediately.

"Alas! this country (where I had ſpent years of felicity—where I had been univerſally reſpected and eſteemed by every rank of people) was now become hateful to me; ſince almoſt every countenance ſeemed to look towards me with a gloomy eye of ſuſpicion, even where I had before been welcomed, whenever I appeared, with ſmiles of friendſhip and confidence.——My God! what were my ſenſations!—Senſible of my own innocence,

cence, ten thouſand deaths (could I *myſelf* alone have ſuffered) would have been leſs torturing to me than the preſent ignominy.—But when I ſaw Lucretia bow to a young lady in the ſtreet where we lived, as ſhe penſively ſat in the window between myſelf and wife,—and ſaw the ſalute contemptuouſly ſmiled at, and paſſed without being returned, (while ſhe and her mother would burſt into tears, and move from the ſpot)—then would I utter to myſelf——'Better, had I ſeen my child executed with me, in the view of a gazing multitude, declaring my innocence,—than thus to be doomed to ſhrink under the wounds of blaſted fame and ſuppoſed infamy.'

"My affairs were very ſoon ſettled; and, with my wife and daughter, (attended by one man and a woman-ſervant) I ſet out for Genoa, where, according to appointment, I was to meet the author of all my miſeries.——Our journey was neceſſarily ſlow, on account of the ill health of my Caſſandra, who had ſuffered ſo ſevere a ſhock from our late misfortunes, that I was under the greateſt alarm for her life.

"After ſome little time we arrived at the place of our temporary deſtination,——and applying to a perſon to whom I had a recommendation, he informed me, count D'Ollifont had been waiting for me two days, and that I might ſee him that night at a certain place to which he would conduct me.——'It is not publicly known,' ſaid he, 'that he is in this country; conſequently ſecrecy is required.'

"At

"At my return to the inn, I found my wife had been taken more violently ill than uſual, inſomuch that Lucretia had ſent for a phyſician, who had juſt entered the houſe.——I aſked his opinion on leaving the chamber:—he declared her diſorder to be a total decline,—but did not then apprehend any danger. Towards the latter part of the day ſhe grew better:—but I reſolved not to mention my intended viſit; and I contrived an excuſe, therefore, for my departure at the hour I had fixed.

"It was ſome time after the cloſe of the evening, and nearly dark, when I met the man whom I had before ſeen in the morning.—He told me to follow him.—I rather heſitated.—'You have no reaſon for alarm,' ſaid he, obſerving me attentively.

"I had a brace of piſtols in my pocket; and, after a few moments of conſideration, did as he deſired.

"He firſt led me down a paſſage, of conſiderable length, at the bottom of which he halted.—Having produced a large key, he opened a ſmall door, which diſcovered a gloomy Gothic hall, lighted by a lamp, which was ſuſpended from the top. It was ſupported by heavy Tuſcan columns; and, in different niches, were placed, in order, ſeveral ſuits of armour.—At the further end was a flight of ſteps, on the top of which were a heavy pair of folding doors, arched over in the antique ſtyle above, and ſecured in front by a grate-work of iron.

"My

"My guide, when he got to the centre of this place, ſeemed to fall back a few paces, as if thoughtful; and then, holding up the lantern he had in his hand, looked me full in the face.——This behaviour I did not by any means like:—it had the appearance of aſſaſſination, and the gloom of the hall encouraged the idea.—I immediately drew one of my piſtols from my pocket.—'No treachery!' I exclaimed; 'or, by heavens, you die!'

"He ſeemed diſconcerted.——'By all that's ſacred, I mean none; but only wiſhed to be certain I was right in the perſon I am conducting.'

'Tis well!' I anſwered:—'proceed.'

"He did ſo—and led me up the ſteps;—then, taking from his pocket another key, he applied it to the lock of the iron grating.——It required great exertions to turn it; but it at length yielded to the force, and divided in the middle.—The door now only remained.

'Put up your piſtol, ſignor:' ſaid he; 'you have nothing to fear.'

"This requeſt I poſitively refuſed.—He then blew a ſmall horn, which he had in his belt; when the folding doors immediately flew open, and two blacks with drawn ſabres ſtood before us.

"A voice from the inner part now uttered——'Admit.'——They directly drew back, and we paſſed through the entrance.——The doors inſtantly cloſed, with ſome noiſe; and the blacks reſumed their ſtation before them.

"My

"My guide walked forward, and I followed with the piſtol ſtill in my hand.

"It was a ſpacious apartment, though gloomy; and fitted up with ſome degree of elegance.——A few wax tapers were placed round the walls; but the light they gave was dim and uncertain.—In the middle was a long table, covered with green cloth; and on it were ſpread various papers, pens, ink, and a few books. A company of perſons were ſeated round it, of about twelve or thirteen, and one at the head of the table ſeemed a kind of preſident in the aſſembly.——Their cloaks were all muffled round them; and a black feather, which each wore in his hat, hung over their faces, and added to the ſolemnity of their dark lengthened viſages.——He at the head, I however obſerved, wore a white one.

"As I advanced, this perſon ſpoke; and I recogniſed the wretch D'Ollifont.——He aſked why I meaſured my ſteps ſo cautiouſly?

"Becauſe," I anſwered, in a firm tone, 'I am afraid of treachery.'

"Surely the fear is needleſs,' ſaid he:—'have I not ſworn—?'

"I interrupted him—'Mention it not, D'Ollifont; you have ſworn too much.

"He ſeemed rather confuſed; and I could perceive his gloomy countenance frown for the moment, though he wiſhed to ſmile.——'Take a ſeat,' he cried: 'we are all friends.——Nerone, help the ſignor to a glaſs of wine.'

"This

" This man, who was in waiting, directly ran to a large ſide-board covered with fruit, cakes, and wines. He handed the glaſs: I refuſed it.—D'Ollifont entreated me to take it:——I determinately anſwered, 'No.'

" To buſineſs,' ſaid he.

" With all my heart,' I anſwered.——'But, mark me, count! ſtrictly adhere to the oath I have taken; nor, in your requeſt, infringe on the laws of general honeſty, morality, or humanity; for on thoſe conditions only will I agree.'

" I mean no otherwiſe,' ſaid D'Ollifont:——'be judge yourſelf.——I have an eſtate ſituated near Montferrat; and on it ſtands the reſidence of my late uncle, Orlando, count Maſerini.——The building is well known by the name of Graſville Abbey.——This, among other properties, was bequeathed to me, as his ſole heir; his two children having died in France.——Now the country people round the ſpot, for many miles, have encouraged ideas, from the gloomy appearance and Gothic ſtructure of this ancient pile, that it is haunted; and it is actually neceſſary for the preſervation of the furniture, papers, and other valuables, of conſiderable amount, that theſe ſuſpicions ſhould be kept alive; which will more effectually prevent intruſion or robbery than any other method we can put into execution; the peaſants of that part being a wild untractable kind of people, and little better than general depredators on the public.

" You

" You perhaps may wonder why we do not remove theſe articles; but my uncle's will particularly requeſts every individual atom that was at his death in the abbey, ſhould remain there, and only be taken from it as my neceſſity may require.——Now there are various deeds and memorandums, relative to his different poſſeſſions, that we may never have the leaſt occaſion to diſturb; and which, conſequently, will be open to the violence of any one whoſe curioſity or villany may prompt him to uſe force in entering the abbey.——The ſervice that I have to requeſt from you, is the performance of ſome trifling ceremony, with a lamp, in the external part of the building, at night, either by paſſing the caſements with it in your hand, or fixing it for ſhort periods of time at the different windows. This will be an innocent means of preventing invaſion; and by conſtantly viſiting the abbey, your ſcruples will be ſatisfied in point of the extent of your oath.

" Your fortune will ſupport you ſo as to enjoy the ſuperfluities of life; and your reſidence may be fixed at any part near the abbey.——But one condition,' continued he, ' goes further,—that if at any time, though many years hence, you diſcover perſons to enter the abbey, and reſide there, without notice from me, you ſhall immediately take every means in your power to raiſe in them alarms of ſupernatural appearances, and by that means drive them from the ſpot.——For your better convenience, there is a cave on one ſide of the

the wood which ſurrounds the abbey, that is never intruded upon, nor indeed hardly known by any one in the place:——you may go to it of an evening; and from thence proceed, through a ſubterraneous paſſage, to the building.——If, after two years' conſtant performance of theſe injunctions, no interruption is perceived, you will not then be confined to the uſual ceremony; but yet it is requeſted that a continual watch ſhall be kept upon it; and, as I before obſerved, if intruded on, even fifty years to come, and both of us living, every means is to be uſed in the above mentioned manner, to terrify all viſitors to a removal.'

"I muſt confeſs, this requeſt, ſtrange as it was, ſeemed far more agreeable to me than what I expected; and I conceived that, were there any villany lurking under it, I might diſcover the ſource,——and, without going from my oath, be of conſiderable ſervice to the injured; and, one time or other, have it in my power to retaliate on D'Ollifont.—I requeſted that the agreement ſhould be drawn up on paper, that I might adhere to it, in time to come, without an idea of having forgotten its tendency.

"This was agreed to,——and, in the courſe of an hour, it was finiſhed. I carefully read the paper, and found it exactly correſponded with what D'Ollifont had ſaid,—and then again ſwore, as I had before promiſed to do, that I would punctually fulfil it. As we were ſome miles from Montferrat, it was ſettled I ſhould meet

one

one of the company at a certain ſpot near the abbey, that day fortnight, who was to conduct me to it through the paſſage before mentioned, ſhow the cave, &c. and give any inſtructions I wiſhed to receive. D'Ollifont mentioned that he ſhould leave Italy on the next day, and return to Spain. As I was leaving the apartment, following my guide, he uttered, as if in ſome meaſure affected, 'Adieu!'

"I immediately turned round, and, with a piercing look of horror and contempt, anſwered, 'Adieu!—I hope, for ever.'

"He ſeemed chagrined, and looked as if ſurpriſed I was not more in awe at ſuch a place.—He again ſeated himſelf.——We paſſed the blacks—the door cloſed after us,—and my guide locked the grates.——We then left the hall; and, that door being alſo locked, I ſoon found myſelf at the end of the place where we entered:——my companion then wiſhed me a good night, and we parted.

"A heavy load now ſeemed to have fallen from me; for the expectation of what D'Ollifont's requeſt might be, had driven me almoſt to madneſs; and though even now I deteſted the meanneſs I had ſubmitted to,—yet, in ſome degree, I was reconciled, when recollection whiſpered me that I had ſaved the life of my Lucretia, the beloved child of my heart.

"Pleaſed with the ideas of the pleaſure I ſhould convey to Caſſandra in relating the ſervice I was to perform (her dread of it having been equal to

my own), I ſhortly found myſelf at the inn where we reſided.——I ſoon made my way to our apartments, in one of which I found the woman-ſervant, Stella, in tears, mixing a draught: ——I involuntarily exclaimed, 'How is your lady?'

"Her anſwer, hardly articulate, pronounced 'Dying, my lord.'

"I heard no more,——but flew, half frantic, to her chamber,—where (oh!' ſight of woe!) on the bed was laid my beloved Caſſandra, juſt recovered from a fainting fit; her head ſupported by Lucretia, and the phyſician ſeated (in a melancholy poſture) on the other ſide.—I entered time enough to receive her laſt breath; and dropping on my knees, I claſped her hands, while tears flowed in abundance.—She knew me (though ſhe had been inſenſible for nearly an hour), and exclaimed, 'My huſband,——the Almighty aid thee!'——Then, turning her eyes towards her daughter, ſhe ſeemed inwardly to ſupplicate heaven in her behalf; and, heaving a ſoft ſigh, expired in my arms.——Lucretia fainted, and was ſupported by Stella, who had juſt brought the draught, while I remained loſt for ſome time in gloomy ſorrow and ſtupidity.

"At length, turning to the phyſician, I deſired to know why he had flattered me with hopes that ſhe might live for a length of time.——He only anſwered by ſhaking his head, and ſaying the diſorder had come to a criſis ſooner than he expected.——He left the inn; and I (having ordered

ordered my daughter to be put to bed, and committed the care of the funeral to my confidential ſervant Jaſper) retired to my own room, overwhelmed with the moſt poignant grief.

" It is impoſſible to deſcribe the anguiſh ſuffered by myſelf and child on this mournful event; I ſhall, therefore, draw a veil over the ſcene, a recollection of which is even now almoſt too much for me."

The hermit here was conſtrained to make a pauſe of ſome few minutes, while he paid a tributary tear to the memory of ſo beloved a wife.

" Suffice it to ſay,' continued he, ' in the courſe of a week ſhe was interred near the place where we then reſided, and I tore myſelf from the ſpot after a few days, with the two ſervants, and my now only remaining comfort, my dear Lucretia.

" After a long day's journey, a prey to the deepeſt melancholy, we arrived at Monferrat, and ſtopped at a tolerably built cottage; the owner of which, fortunately, had an inclination, and alſo convenience, to accommodate us with board and lodging for ſome weeks.——The ſituation ſuited me for the preſent, as it was extremely retired.

" On the night and hour appointed, accompanied by Jaſper, whom I was permitted to acquaint with the circumſtances I was involved in, I attended the place of rendezvous, where I was to be met by the perſon deputed by D'Ollifont.

" We were both punctual; and, as I was ſtill fearful of treachery from ſo vile a character, both myſelf and ſervant were armed.——He was alone:—his figure, which I could now more fully obſerve, was noble and majeſtic: his countenance very handſome, though there was a fierceneſs in his eyes, added to the turn of his dark brows, which made it in ſome reſpects terrific.

' Follow me,' ſaid he; ' and I will conduct you to the place you have before heard of.'

" He led us to the cave I now inhabit.——We entered, and he ſhowed me the parts which you have already ſeen; but after ſome little time he opened a concealed door, that diſcovered a ſmall room.——From hence we deſcended, by a trap artfully joined to the floor, a number of ſteps, at the bottom of which was an arched ſubterraneous paſſage, entirely dark:——our guide, however, was provided with a lamp, by which he lighted another placed againſt the wall.——We followed him along this place for ſo conſiderable a length of time that I knew not how far he might have taken us, and halted at the idea.

" Continue your pace,' ſaid he; ' and we ſhall ſoon be at the end of our journey.'

" His words were true; for, after a few windings, it terminated at a ſmall door, hardly large enough to admit one perſon:——this we paſſed, and aſcended a flight of ſtone ſtairs.——At the top, we entered a ſmall ſubterraneous room,——in which was a ſtool, a table, ſome eatables, and wine; with a bed, which ſhowed (though empty now)

now) it was daily occupied.——Our guide preſſed againſt a ſpring, in a manner which he particularly explained; and, by a kind of mechaniſm, aided by clock-work placed at the further part of the apartment, a ſquare of about five feet of the cieling above gradually fell within two feet of the floor on which we ſtood:——this I jumped upon,—and, by a ſecond preſſure of the foot on a certain part, it roſe in the ſame manner that it fell, and cloſed with equal nicety; by which means I found myſelf in that room oppoſite to the one we are now in.

"The night was exceeding gloomy: conſiderable claps of thunder followed each other (though they ſeemed at a diſtance), and faint flaſhes of lightning darted on the caſements.——Both my ſervant and our conductor were ſoon with me, by the ſame means that I had aſcended; and we all three proceeded through this room to the hall, where we were met by a mean, meagre-looking fellow, with alſo a lamp in his hand, that reflected on a countenance I did not by any means approve.

"It was now too late, and a more than common oppreſſion ſeemed to weigh on my ſpirits.—Our guide ſaluted this man.——'Enuchio,' ſaid he, 'has there been any interruption ſince the count laſt ſaw you?'

'None, ſignor,' he anſwered; 'and I have regularly performed my duty with this lamp every night.'

"That's

'That's well,' returned the other; 'lead us to the weſt tower.'

"Jaſper now whiſpered to me, 'Be careful, my lord:——we know not who may be concealed there.'

"I ſtrove to quiet his apprehenſions by a nod of confidence, though I felt conſiderable alarm myſelf.——There was, however, no alternative, and we followed in ſilence.——I underſtood from the converſation of Enuchio and the other, as we were proceeding to the weſt tower, that the former had attended at the cloſe of every evening, to perform the ceremony now inveſted on me.

"In paſſing through one of the chambers, Jaſper (who was behind, and partly in the dark) ran againſt a ſuit of armour that was placed there, with ſeveral implements of war, ſome of which are now in one of the rooms under the upper apartments.——The craſh it made in falling was horrible; and it had nearly deſtroyed my faithful attendant; he, however, fortunately eſcaped, without any material blow.

"Enuchio ſaid, when we entered the chamber above, that he thought he could ſee, through one of the caſements, by the frequent flaſhes of lightning, ſome perſon on that ſide of the building.—He accordingly ſhowed his light, and after a few minutes, paſſed the caſement with the lamp in his hand.——Having looked over this room, we deſcended to the lower part, where we heard ſeveral blows againſt the outer gates, and many efforts made to force them open."

It is natural to ſuppoſe that this was the very night on which the late Percival Maſerini, father of Alfred and Matilda, firſt diſcovered a light and figure in the abbey; which made him at the time (diſtracted with his own ideas) attempt by force, to enter the building.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XII.

" WE were all ſurpriſed at the noiſe:—at length ſignor Ranolpho (which I now found was the name of our guide) ſaid, he ſuppoſed it proceeded from the curioſity of ſome travellers who were paſſing that way.——I cannot ſay I was by any means well ſatisfied with this conjecture; but I made no anſwer.

" After having received many inſtructions from him, concerning the different pieces of mechaniſm contrived in this building, I remarked, with a look of ſome aſtoniſhment, that it was to me amazing, count D'Ollifont ſhould have put himſelf to ſuch expenſe and trouble, when the exertions of the civil power, under juſt claims, might have anſwered the purpoſes he wiſhed to accompliſh.

" Ranolpho ſeemed confuſed:——after a pauſe he anſwered, ' Your obſervation is juſt; but were the application made to the ſuperior power of Italy, the curioſity of the peaſantry would be ſtill more conſiderably heightened; and I have doubts whether the vigilance of the moſt ſcrutiniſing perſons could protect this place from their invaſion.——It alſo would gain count D'Ollifont a bad name, which might, through their ignorance,

rance, occaſion ſuſpicions and remarks the moſt injurious to his character.——Beſides,' he continued, 'the chief part of theſe articles of machinery were erected many years back, when this ſtructure was inhabited by the monks; they made uſe of them to terrify perſons of different ſentiments in religious points to their own way of thinking, whom the chance of war had made their priſoners, and who accordingly were confined in their own abbey. By theſe arts, the victims of their ſuperſtition were taught to believe the holy fathers worked miracles by their faith.'

"There was a kind of equivocation in this ſpeech, which I by no means means liked, though I forbore to make any reply.——What he ſaid, however, concerning ſeveral of the traps, &c. being formed at a diſtant period of time, I found to be true, by the general appearance of the age of the workmanſhip; though there was not a doubt but they had lately been repaired and put in order.

"After a little time, we all left the abbey, and proceeded to the cave, where it was ſettled that I ſhould meet Enuchio at that ſpot, and at the ſame hour, the following night.——Ranolpho ſaid he ſhould leave Montferrat the next morning, and make the beſt of his way immediately after D'Ollifont to Spain.

"We then parted.——Jaſper and myſelf ſoon arrived at the cottage, after ſome converſation on the ſtrange events we had witneſſed.

"I acquainted Lucretia with every circumſtance relative to the abbey; and, though ſhe expreſſed a conſiderable anxiety for my ſafety, yet, like myſelf, ſhe was happy to find the requeſt of D'Ollifont was no worſe.——I, however, made her ſtill more eaſy, by aſſuring her I never intended to viſit the building, unaccompanied by Jaſper.

"In leſs than a month I hired a houſe very little diſtant from the cottage:—it was not large, though neat and elegant; and, there being only my daughter and myſelf, a few domeſtics were ſufficient to form our houſehold.——I did not, however, intend to live by any means private or retired, though my own wiſhes prompted me to it.——I trembled for the health of my child:—it had been on the decline ever ſince the commencement of our misfortunes,—and the poignant grief ſhe ſuffered for the loſs of her mother, now ſeemed ſettled to a deep melancholy, which I dreaded to obſerve, and which my own health and ſpirits, I conceived, helped to increaſe.

"It was for theſe reaſons, therefore, that I puniſhed myſelf, in receiving and paying viſits to perſons of diſtinction, for ſome miles round; and I could perceive, in ſome degree, it contributed to leſſen that weight of oppreſſion which ſeemed to lie ſo heavy on her ſoul.

"A month had not elapſed after my removal to my new dwelling, before a confuſed report was ſpread that Percival Maſerini and his ſiſter were yet living, and in Italy.

"This

"This intelligence ſeemed, in ſome reſpects, to unravel a part of the myſterious manner and requeſt of D'Ollifont; but I muſt own, the elucidations I pictured to myſelf were by no means favourable to him; and dark ſchemes of villany ſeemed to unfold themſelves to my view. —But ſtill I could do nothing; I was bound by my oath; and ſuſpicions were of no avail.——I and Jaſper viſited the abbey every night; and, on thoſe occaſions, I made every ſearch that was poſſible, to find a clue to D'Ollifont's conduct, which I ſuppoſed might be concealed in ſome part of the building:—my endeavours, however, proved unſucceſsful.——Enuchio ſtill continued near the place: and I could not but ſuſpect that he was as a kind of watch upon my conduct.—— His very looks ſeemed to indicate the blackeſt thoughts; and his manners confirmed the idea.

"About this period, among the many foreigners who frequented my villa as they paſſed thro' Montferrat, was lord Albourne, a young Engliſhman of rank and conſiderable fortune."

Matilda and Alfred ſtarted at the name; but they forbore to interrupt the hermit, who accordingly proceeded——

"His manner pleaſed both myſelf and daughter; in ſhort, there was a kind of noble ſincerity in his diſpoſition, which, on a little further acquaintance, charmed me.——I muſt allow I felt a conſiderable happineſs, on obſerving a mutual affection take place between my Lucretia and this nobleman.——His character, I underſtood from

correſpondents whom I could depend upon in England, was unblemiſhed; and I knew I could beſtow on my child a fortune worthy of ſuch a huſband.—Suffice it to ſay, he declared his ſentiments; and ſhe, above the little arts of female coquetry, confeſſed ſhe loved him.——But ſtill there were ſome obſtacles to the marriage.—Lord Albourne had not yet been acquainted with my misfortunes, or with Lucretia's attempt on D'Ollifont's life.——To Lucretia there was alſo another impediment:—ſhe muſt part with me for ſome time; his lordſhip had promiſed, after ſettling his affairs in England, he would return with her, and conſent to remain in Montferrat during my life-time.—But it would, at leaſt, take twelve months to tranſact theſe affairs.——Theſe twelve months' abſence ſeemed to her a century, and darkened every proſpect of felicity ſhe might have hoped to have enjoyed.——At length, however, theſe obſtacles were overcome:——lord Albourne was, by me, informed of the ſufferings I had undergone,——and of Lucretia's impetuoſity, in attempting to aſſaſſinate the author of my misfortunes.—His lordſhip ſympathiſed with me in my diſtreſſes, and admired the heroic love of my child, though he was ſorry ſhe had thrown herſelf into the power of ſuch a wretch.

"The latter objection was at length over-ruled by him: and, I may ſay, conſiderably leſſened by D'Ollifont, from whom at this period I received a letter in terms of the warmeſt friendſhip, and breathing, in ſome degree, a regret for the anguiſh

anguiſh he had cauſed.——The contents of it informed me, that (it having been hinted to him that my health was in a precarious ſtate, and that travelling would, very probably, prove of infinite ſervice) he would undertake that ſome one ſhould perform my part in the abbey, if I choſe to take a journey for two months, to re-eſtabliſh my conſtitution.——D'Ollifont's character was now too well known to me, for me to conceive one favourable trait in his diſpoſition; otherwiſe, this deception might have paſſed for an act of kindneſs and repentance.—I ſtrangely ſuſpected ſome foul deeds were to be executed in my abſence, and at firſt reſolved not to accept the offer: but, at length, overcome by the tears of Lucretia and the perſuaſions of lord Albourne, I conſented to accompany them to France, but determined to return at leaſt a fortnight before the limited time.

"My ſituation was critical; I dared not communicate my ſuſpicions to any one, except Jaſper:—my oath forbade it.—My ſurpriſe, however, was conſiderably increaſed by finding that Percival Maſerini and his ſiſter were actually in Italy; and that the latter, by the authority of the king of Sardinia, had ſent to Spain, to demand the keys of Graſville Abbey from count D'Ollifont, that the building might be ſearched, to find if another will could be produced of the late count Maſerini, in favour of his children before his nephew.

"An idea now ſtruck me, which I conſidered would at once give me an opportunity of diſcovering

vering the dark machinations of D'Ollifont reſpecting the abbey, though abſent from Montferrat.

"I therefore wrote a ſhort anſwer to his letter, ſaying I ſhould accept the vacation he offered me.——At the ſame time I determined to leave Jaſper at my houſe, concealed, that they might ſuppoſe he was alſo with me.——I knew I could depend on his fidelity, courage and underſtanding. To him, therefore, I related the forebodings of my own mind, and gave him inſtructions accordingly,—with a particular caution, that, ſhould he find any one was confined there, or any treacherous ſchemes whatever going forward, he ſhould immediately write to me, and (on the receipt of this token) I ſhould come poſt, and incognito, to my villa.

"Lord Albourne and Lucretia were ſhortly united, after an acquaintance of only ſix months; and, as ſoon as the ceremony was performed, we ſet off for France.——Our journey was pleaſant; and if ever I enjoyed one gleam of comfort after my misfortunes in Spain and the loſs of my Caſſandra, it was in this ſhort period.——A gloom, however, ſtill hung over the countenance of Lucretia; the idea of leaving me proved a continual drawback on her felicity; and the diſtreſſing day was ſomewhat haſtened, by a letter from Jaſper, requeſting me to return immediately.

"That fortitude, however, which I conceived I ſhould exert when I parted with the only prop of my exiſtence, failed me entirely at the afflict-

ing

ing moment; and (inſtead of being able to ſupport her through the trial) I found I in a great meaſure added to her grief, by the pangs I ſuffered myſelf, which were too acute to be concealed.—Lord Albourne ſeemed to ſhare the ſorrows of us both; and (after ſhedding tears on my head) he removed his wife from my arms, that inſenſibly held her to my breaſt, and hurried her, in a fainting fit, to the carriage,——which with cruel ſwiftneſs ſoon bore her from my ſight.

"Alas! every beam of pleaſure ſeemed now vaniſhed, and the melancholy proſpects of my mind received another tint of darkneſs, horror, and miſery.—But a few months back, I had been the happieſt of mortals,—the father of a lovely, amiable, child,——the huſband of an angelic wife,—the poſſeſſor of an unblemiſhed reputation:——now was I an exile, though in my native country; bereft of wife, child, and even reputation, in the eyes of the world; labouring under a ſtigma of ſhattered fame, never to be recovered.

"Tormented with thoſe ideas, I ſet out on my return to Italy; but, unfortunately, was detained, through many incidents on the road, for near three days.——I, immediately on my arrival at my villa, had a private conference with Jaſper.

"His countenance ſhowed he had much to tell, and that of a dreadful nature.—He informed me, that, after my departure, he kept himſelf as ſecret as poſſible, according to my orders, and only

only went out by night, and then concealed himſelf at a place near the cave. The ſecond time of his watching, he perceived Enuchio and three others, whom he did not by any means like, cautiouſly enter it about midnight,——and, ſome time after, he ſaw a light paſs one of the caſements in the weſt tower of the abbey; but, though he remained at the ſame place till near day-break, he never ſaw them return.——He attended again the next evening at an early hour, but ſaw no one go that way, though a light and the figure of a man moved ſeveral times, in the courſe of three hours, before the different windows.——He therefore concluded that thoſe whom he had ſeen the night before had taken up their habitation entirely in the abbey.—He ſtill, however, continued to keep a watchful eye on the building.

" On the eighth day ſome confuſion was experienced among the peaſantry. A ſignor Balvolio, a phyſician, with officers of juſtice, and a ſervant of Percival Maſerini, arrived at Montferrat, to ſearch for him.——He had the night before, according to the ſervant's account, entered the abbey, while the man waited for him without; who fell aſleep, and did not awake till morning: ——he then entered to look after his maſter, but his exertions proved fruitleſs; he was no where to be found.——His footſteps were traced to an apartment in the weſt tower; where alſo a picture which he wore next his heart, was found, the ribbon of which ſeemed torn by force; but

from

from this room no other ſigns of him could be traced.

" Jaſper was equally aſtoniſhed and alarmed at this intelligence.——He had omitted to attend at the uſual place the night before, having been extremely ill; he, however, contrived to be among thoſe who entered with the ſtrangers to ſearch the building, and with them examined that very apartment of the weſt tower, where with me he had oft-times performed the uſual ceremonies with the lamp.——He then, with the reſt, left the abbey, and heard it agreed on, between the phyſician and officers, that the doors and outer gates ſhould be left unlocked.

" On his return home he directly ſent off a letter to me, acquainting me with theſe proceedings; but, unfortunately, I had, the day before the arrival of it at the place it was directed to, ſet off for another part of France; and Jaſper, after ſome time, had the mortification to receive it again unopened.

" In this interval he was, however, by no means idle,——and he determined, let the hazard be what it would, to go over the abbey himſelf at midnight.——He at the ſame time reſolved to enter from the principal gates, being aware, did he attempt to paſs the ſecret paſſage, there was hardly a doubt but he ſhould be interrupted.

" This ſcheme he carried into execution, and proceeded well armed, with a dark lantern, to the hall.——He had not remained, in an obſcure part of it, above five minutes, before Enuchio

and

and two others came forth from that apartment; which proved they muſt have been in the ſubterraneous chamber, and conſequently had aſcended by means of the trap.—Theſe men had, all three, lamps,——and, ſhortly after, they were followed by a figure of noble mien, muffled up in his cloak, and his hat, in which was a white feather, flapped over his eyes.——But how was Jaſper aſtoniſhed, when, by the light of one of their lamps, which glared on his countenance, he diſcovered the features of D'Ollifont!

"Being now more fully convinced that the moſt horrid treachery and villany was going forward,—though every moment in danger of being diſcovered, he perſiſted in following them at ſome little diſtance.——They proceeded ſlowly through the iron gate that leads to the ruins of a once magnificent place of worſhip, and walked to the centre, on which part ſtands a tomb to the memory of a monk, who, in former times, was a ſuperior of this abbey.

"One of the men having put down a ſmall baſket, covered lightly over with a cloth, which ſeemed to contain ſome proviſion, they all four entered the tomb.——But it was impoſſible for Jaſper to follow them here alſo; as the ſize would hardly have admitted five perſons to keep far enough apart in it to prevent diſcovery.

"He heard a kind of noiſe which plainly told they were opening a large trap, and it ſeemed to require the exertions of three of them.——He heard D'Ollifont ſpeak:—'Take down the proviſions;

viſions; I will remain here.——Leave the baſket, and ſay nothing.' Jaſper ſuppoſed they did ſo; for, after ſome little time, he heard them replace the trap; and they paſſed by him as they returned to the apartment from whence they came.

"He immediately, by the ſame method he had entered, quitted the abbey, ſhocked at what he had been witneſs to, and entirely at a loſs in what manner to act.——He knew himſelf to be entangled by a promiſe of ſecrecy, ſimilar to that of mine, on which terms only I had been ſuffered to make him my confidant; but yet he was certain, as well as myſelf, that it did not prevent our aid or aſſiſtance to any one diſtreſſed or confined in the building; or our exertions to fruſtrate any plans of wickedneſs or cruelty which the count might form, provided we did not diſcover thoſe circumſtances in which we were involved relative to the light, &c.——Our ſituations were both extremely delicate; and though we would have riſked our lives in the ſervice of the unfortunate, yet we could not but recollect with horror, the forfeiture incurred by the breach of an awful oath.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XIII.

"JASPER at length fixed on a ſcheme, which effectually confirmed his wiſhes to ſerve the unfortunate, by the courage and ingenuity he diſplayed in the execution of it.——He determined to let the much-injured Percival Maſerini know (if ſuch a perſon there was in the abbey,—a circumſtance of which he had little if any doubt) that there was one who was acquainted with his unhappy ſituation, and pitied him,——nay, would run all hazards to aſſiſt him to eſcape, if he could contrive any ſtratagem that carried in it the leaſt proſpect of ſucceſs.——Words to this purpoſe he wrote on a ſheet of paper,——at the ſame time mentioning he would attend in the tomb the next night, at an early hour, before the uſual attendance of D'Ollifont and his aſſiſtants; a feeble hope inducing him to think they might converſe together, though with difficulty.

"A ſudden idea now ſtruck him, which had nearly over-ruled his preſent determination.——Why not immediately apply to the civil power, whom he could at once lead to the place of confinement; and, by proof, cruſh D'Ollifont and the wretches concerned?——The pen dropt from his

his hand:—he roſe with joy at the thought.——Heſitation and reflection again ſtopped him:——he knew not how I would have acted in this caſe. Strong as were his ſuſpicions, they were as yet but ſuſpicions; ſhould he make them publicly known,—and, at this criſis, ſhould they fail, (which, though entirely improbable, was not actually an impoſſibility) it was uncertain in what ſtate he might involve both himſelf and me.——But this might, at leaſt, be done at the laſt extremity,—and in two days more he expected I ſhould return.

"In ſhort, he proceeded as he had before intended, and accordingly finiſhed his note,——not without, however, mentioning, at the latter part, hints of the diſagreeable ties that entangled him with D'Ollifont.—Another conſideration now interrupted him:——he wiſhed to ſign a name, but not either his own or mine; that, in caſe the letter ſhould be diſcovered, it might not, at the firſt inſtant, be apparent who was the author of it.——After ſome little time he wrote at the bottom, 'Father Peter,' that it might be ſuppoſed to be ſome holy man, who, diſdaining the idle talk relative to the abbey, had made it a place for his meditations, and had conſequently diſcovered what was going forward.

"Jaſper, at night, attended at a particular ſpot in the chapel.——In a ſhort time he heard them enter, but could not perceive D'Ollifont.——One of them, whom he had noticed the night before, he now diſcovered to be Eburne.——They immediately

mediately walked to the tomb, and followed each other in; the baſket, as on the former night, was ſlightly covered with a cloth, and put down on the outſide of the door, while they removed the trap.——Jaſper now ſaw the opportunity he wiſhed to make uſe of; and, while they were buſily employed, he advanced, turned the cloth on one ſide from the top of the baſket, thruſt the paper down among the proviſion, and replaced the covering as he found it.——In leſs than a minute after he had returned to his hiding-place, one of them came forth, and took it away:—he ſoon after heard the trap cloſed, and, again paſſing him, they returned, as he ſuppoſed, to the ſubterraneous room; while he left the abbey, elated, in ſome degree, with the ſucceſs of his ſcheme.

" The next night arrived; and Jaſper, with another letter, repaired, as ſoon as it was dark, to the chapel, with a palpitating heart for the iſſue of his undertaking.——He entered the tomb, put his mouth to the trap, which, with ſome trouble, he found; then called ſeveral times, but received no anſwer:——he repeated the name of Maſerini ſtill louder, till he was afraid he had diſcovered himſelf to D'Ollifont's party.——Soon after, he thought he heard a kind of groaning from below; but it was indiſtinct and faint:——in ſhort, he was now certain the cell was ſo low, it was impoſſible to exchange words with any one beneath.——His diſappointment, however, did not abate his perſeverance; and he now waited

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to place his note, in which he had related the regret he felt at not being able to hear him; and, after begging him to ſupport himſelf with fortitude, he declared his intending, if every ſcheme failed, to apply to the magiſtracy of the place.

" The men, as uſual, approached; but D'Ollifont was again abſent. One of them carried the baſket:——unfortunately, he did not place it before the door, but took it with him into the tomb; in conſequence of which, Jaſper was unable to ſend the paper he had got ready.—After they left the chapel, he departed from the abbey, overwhelmed with chagrin and diſtreſs at the failure of his enterpriſe.——The next morning brought the letter which he had wrote to me, back again, with information that no ſuch perſon could be found at the place where it was directed.——He immediately diſpatched another, which found me at B * * *.

" One more night he reſolved to try if Fortune would favour him; and he determined, ſhould ſhe not, to run all hazards, and apply for juſtice the following day.

" He was juſt going to leave the houſe, when he obſerved three men lurking about, as if watching it; he therefore waited ſome little time before he ſet off.——About half an hour after, he perceived they were gone; and accordingly walked towards the abbey.——He had but juſt arrived at one of the ſolitary avenues leading to the principal gate, when the ſame three men, as he ſuppoſed, ruſhed from behind ſome thick foliage

foliage of cedar, and demanded his money.——They, however, waited for no anſwer, but knocked him down:——they then rifled his pockets; and, after giving him ſeveral blows on the head, and ſtabs with a dagger in the ſide and breaſt, left him; doubtleſs with an idea that he was dead.

"In this ſtate he continued till morning, when he in ſome degree recovered his ſenſes, though unable to move, and almoſt to ſpeak.——His ſituation was dreadful:——there was little chance of any one paſſing that way, it being ſo near the abbey; and he ſeemed to be in ſuch a ſtate that he could not poſſibly ſurvive many hours.

"Providentially, however, after a conſiderable length of time, a peaſant ventured into the path, after a ſtrayed mule; he at firſt attempted to run at the ſight of Jaſper's figure, conceiving him to be ſomething ſupernatural; but his feeble voice ſoon convinced the man, who ſtood at a little diſtance, that he was a mortal.——He immediately came up to him; but the exertion he had uſed in ſtriving to make him hear, had now rendered him ſpeechleſs.——The poor fellow, who ſaw and pitied him, directly ran for another man to help; and they carried him between them to the peaſant's cottage.——After ſome little time he was recogniſed, and they ſent to the ſervants at the villa, to acquaint them with the accident.

"Proper aſſiſtance was procured:——in about eight hours he recovered his ſpeech; but yet the phy-

phyſician gave no hopes of his life.——In the courſe of four days his wounds appeared more favourable, and his fever conſiderably abated,—yet ſtill he continued delirious at intervals.——In the courſe of ſix more days, he recovered his ſenſes entirely, and was pronounced out of danger.——He now ſat up ſome hours every day, and ſeemed to gain ſtrength as faſt as could be wiſhed; and the following week, which was the time of my return, he left his chamber, though extremely low.

"In this ſtate I found him, and heard from him the events which had happened in my abſence.——I leave you to judge of my feelings and my ſituation.——There was not a doubt, in my opinion, but that the villains who robbed and ſo cruelly uſed Jaſper, were ſome of D'Ollifont's gang, who knew of his intruſion into the abbey, and determined to keep him away for ſome time, if not to murder him.——I therefore reſolved, however hazardous it might be, to go to the abbey that night, though Jaſper was unable to accompany me:——this reſolution, I muſt own, was raſh: but I thought not on the danger; my paſſions were worked up to the higheſt pitch.

"Soon after it was dark, I repaired to the cave; nothing was altered ſince my laſt viſit.——I proceeded along the ſubterraneous paſſage:——all was ſilent, and gloomy.——In the ſame manner I aſcended to the room; not an article appeared to be moved.——I roſe from the trap to theſe apartments:—I could hear nor ſee nothing;

every thing ſeemed to ſhow not a ſoul had entered it ſince myſelf:—I, at length, even began to conceive doubts whether Jaſper's tale did not proceed from a diſordered imagination.——I walked ſlowly to the gates of the chapel; and, ſtopping a few moments, ſhuddered involuntarily at my own ideas.——The horridly deſolate aſpect of every thing aronnd me encouraged the diſmal train of thoughts that ſtruck on my mind.——I ſhook off this weakneſs, and walked directly to the tomb; where I was ſoon convinced of the truth of Jaſper's report, by finding the trap, which anſwered every deſcription he had given me.——I was, however, incapable to lift it up,—and, having fully ſatisfied myſelf that the place was now clear, returned home.

"The next day, I acquainted Jaſper with my viſit; and we both conceived there was not a ſhadow of doubt but the unfortunate Percival Maſerini had been made away with, during the illneſs of Jaſper.

"In the courſe of a week Jaſper was able to attend me to the abbey, and we proceeded together to the tomb.——We both exerted our ſtrength, and ſoon opened the trap, which diſcovered a flight of narrow ſtone ſteps, by which we deſcended to a conſiderable depth, and at the bottom entered a ſmall ſquare cell, arched over at top.——This place was entirely clear,——nor could any ſigns of murder be diſcovered till Jaſper (as we were leaving of it) by chance

ſtumbled

ſtumbled over a dagger, clotted with blood, partly dried, and in ſome few places begun to ruſt.——This, I reſolved, ſhould for the preſent remain where it was; and, after we had performed the ceremony with the lamp in the weſt tower (according to my oath, which I ſtrictly adhered to), we returned, ſhocked at our efforts being fruſtrated, relative to diſcovering the manner in which Percival Maſerini had been treated.

" For about a month I was undetermined in my conjectures on theſe circumſtances, and conſiderations in what manner to act.——Every law of nature and juſtice, however, ſeemed to demand I ſhould, if poſſible, make what intelligence I had received known, and bring D'Ollifont to account, on the charge of Jaſper.

" My reſolution to this purpoſe had not been fixed above a day, when the poor fellow was taken ill with a relapſe of the fever that had before been cauſed by his wounds; and one of theſe wounds which he received on the breaſt, and which he had taken leſs account of than the reſt, now ſhowed ſigns of mortification. Advice from every part near was ſent for; but their conſultations proved of no avail; for, in leſs than a week, I ſaw him breathe his laſt in a ſtate of inſanity.

" Every idea of bringing D'Ollifont to juſtice now vaniſhed,——and the death of this faithful ſervant preyed on my ſpirits, (which, though bad at the time of my leaving Spain, had gradually

grown worſe ever ſince), inſomuch that, at this period, it almoſt affected my ſenſes at certain times.——Still it was a kind of melancholy madneſs, which was of ſhort duration in its intervals; and, conſequently, could not be diſcovered, but by the few perſons who were continually with me,—and they took no notice of it, as they apprehended no ill conſequences from it on my behaviour, which was neither frantic nor outrageous.

" Seven months elapſed under theſe circumſtances; during which time I received two letters from my daughter, who informed me of the tenderneſs and affection of her huſband,——of his ſettling his affairs as quick as poſſible, to return with her to me in Italy, (a period ſhe moſt ſincerely longed for) though ſhe ſuppoſed it would be deferred, on account of an addition to their party, in the perſon of a near relation to myſelf.

This intelligence, at two different times, gave me the moſt ſincere pleaſure and happineſs.—— Like a poor ſhipwrecked mariner, I looked forward through a gloomy proſpect to a little glimpſe of returning comfort.——Alas! that glimpſe was ſoon extinguiſhed, and I arrived at the criſis of my misfortunes.——At the end of near five months' expectation after the laſt letter I had received, another came from his lordſhip,—who, in the moſt ſoothing manner, (though himſelf, by the appearance of his writing, nearly diſtracted) informed me of the death of my Lucretia,

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in child-birth; the infant, which was a girl, having ſurvived.

"Excuſe theſe tears," ſaid the old man.

After a pauſe of ſome minutes, while he ſeemed ſtifled with grief—"Look on them," ſaid he, "not as the effects of womaniſh ideas, or a ſuperannuated mind; but conſider them as indicating one worn down by the rod of adverſity, till fortitude itſelf ſeems to forſake him, and remembrance even yet fills his eyes with drops of anguiſh,—of regret."

CHAP

## CHAP. XIV.

ALFRED, Lord Milverne, and Matilda, venerated the grief of the hermit too much to interrupt his ſorrow, which, after a few minutes' indulgence, he overcame, and continued his narrative.

"This intelligence, as I before obſerved, brought me to the very criſis of my misfortunes; and the delirious fits I laboured under became more frequent, though not more violent.—My ideas were tinctured with a kind of miſanthropy, which every day increaſed, and ſerved to encourage horrid thoughts that had never before gained the leaſt aſcendancy over me:—and the reſult of what I felt was a wiſh (though I ſhrunk from it with affright) to put an end to my own exiſtence.—But the gloom of my mind becoming each day more terrible, worked up every evil influence with double ſtrength.—Pernicious arguments floated in my brain; they ſeemed to ſay I could not do wrong in ridding myſelf of a burdenſome life.—In ſhort, in leſs than three months, I came to the dreadful determination of drinking poiſon.

"I had ſeen no company whatever ſince the laſt news from England, but a reverend father belonging

belonging to a neighbouring monaſtery, with whom I ſpent ſome hours when perfectly collected; but I had, for the laſt month before I took this reſolution, ſeldom even ſeen him. My heated imagination prompted me to aſk him to dine with me the very day I reſolved to commit the crime.—In my victuals, at that meal, I intended to mix a quantity of the poiſonous drug I had already procured.—It is neceſſary, however, to inform you, that, at this period, I was partly inſane, though poſſeſſed in ſome degree of recollection.

" The day arrived; and father Phineas, by appointment, waited on me.—We began dinner, and (I even now tremble at the idea), before it was finiſhed, I executed the dreadful project, and took, with a ſeeming calmneſs, the tinctured food.—I immediately turned our diſcourſe on the ſubject of religion; knowing I had only a few hours to live, I wiſhed to be ſatisfied in ſome points which my diſordered intellects had latterly made me doubt.

" The good man anſwered my queſtions with ſolemnity and truth.—In the courſe of his obſervations, he treated on ſuicide:—I involuntarily ſhuddered. With a ſteady firmneſs, which I ſhall never forget, he ſpoke on the horrid act, and the eternal puniſhment that awaited it.—I turned pale; my lips trembled with convulſive terror at the idea of what I had done, and drops of perſpiration fell from my face.—

face.—Father Phineas obſerved theſe emotions, and inquired if I was ill.—The greateſt alarm prevailed over his features; he gueſſed the cauſe; but delicacy forbade him to mention it, for fear his conjectures ſhould be wrong.—After a few moments I burſt into an agony of tears, and confeſſed myſelf guilty of the deed, that would (as he had clearly explained) produce everlaſting deſtruction.

" He hardly heard the confeſſion, but darted like lightning from the room.—In leſs than ten minutes he returned with a medicine which he had procured at a relation's of his, who reſided near.—I immediately took it; but there was great doubt whether it would take the wiſhed-for effect, as I had ſwallowed the poiſon ſome time.—The agony I ſuffered, in doubtful ſuſpenſe and horror for half an hour, could not be balanced by all my griefs put together, momentarily expecting diſſolution, with no hope of forgiveneſs hereafter.

" At length I brought from my ſtomach the dreadful poiſon:—the operation was violent; and, when over, I found myſelf unable to ſtand; the ſervants were therefore informed by father Phineas, that I had ſuddenly been taken ill.—I was accordingly conveyed to my bed, nor was any one ever acquainted with the real nature of the caſe, he having made an excuſe even in procuring the medicine.

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"In the morning, after ſome hours' ſleep, I found the good man at my bedſide; his manner was now ſevere, and I received from him a ſharp though affecting rebuke; when, after having joined with me in a thankſgiving for my eſcape, he departed, and I remained alone the remainder of the day.

"An inclination which I had before imbibed at intervals, now aſſailed me with redoubled force; it was a wiſh to retire entirely from the world, and live ſecluded and unknown, in the cave which led to Graſville Abbey:—by this I ſhould at once gratify my own deſire, and (if poſſible) more ſtrictly adhere to my oath, which I now more and more, as my health became impaired, conſidered as a duty to my God.

"The next day I communicated the thought to father Phineas, who at firſt attempted to diſſuade me from it, but at laſt agreed that it was a reſolution in ſome degree neceſſary, as a penance for the crime I had been guilty of.—I determined that no one, except himſelf, ſhould know of my retirement; and between us the following ſcheme was therefore contrived.

"I gave it out among my houſehold, that I intended to travel again to France, on account of my health; and, if I found the climate agree with me, might perhaps continue there for ſome years, or entirely ſettle for the remainder of my life.—My domeſtics were therefore

ordered away at a certain time.—I, as was ſuppoſed, left the country; and my villa was ſold by father Phineas.—At different times of the night he had conveyed for me various utenſils and conveniences, to form the neceſſary articles of life, to the cave:—he likewiſe procured the dreſs, &c. of a hermit; and I took poſſeſſion of my new abode, giving the whole amount that my villa and furniture ſold for, to father Phineas, to diſtribute in charitable uſes, beſides a very handſome preſent for himſelf.

"My ſudden departure, and the melancholy ſtate I had ſo long been in, was talked of for ſome time, after which I was partly forgotten, and ſeldom mentioned.

"But it was neceſſary our proceedings ſhould not ſtop here: and, in the courſe of ſix months, father Phineas (who viſited me daily) by my deſire ſpread the report of my death at Paris, and wrote a letter to D'Ollifont, who was then in Spain, to the ſame purport; mentioning it was my requeſt, when living, that, after my deceaſe, information of it ſhould be ſent him.

"Whether he believed the account, I know not: but it is certain he might have been convinced to the contrary, had he taken the trouble to ſend and make inquiries in that city.—But, conceiving, I ſuppoſe, that there were already alarms enough concerning the abbey, to keep it free from intruſion, and that the principal

cipal perſon to contend with him was, by his diabolical arts, no more; knowing that, even if it was ſearched, no material proofs could be brought againſt him, he thought my death rather a releaſe than a misfortune, on account of the thorough knowledge I had of his character.

"But, as if Providence favoured his villany, I could not bring me to diſregard the oath I had taken, ſo that his wiſhes ſtill continued to be fulfilled.—You may, perhaps, wonder at my ſtrict adherence to it: but you muſt conſider my ſituation; every trifle ſwelled in my imagination, which had now nothing to relax it; and my fervency of religion, in reſpect to repenting of the crime I had been guilty of in an attempt to take away my own life, every day became more violent; inſomuch that my horror and miſery increaſed, inſtead of leſſening, the more I thought of its fatal tendency.

"The good father conſtantly viſited me during the remainder of his life, and regularly brought me food; but he has now been dead twelve years.—After that period I was neceſſitated to go to the public market, and upon this account took the name of father Peter, recollecting the ſignature which Jaſper put to the letter he ſent to Percival Maſerini.—Time, and the diſguiſe I was in, totally prevented me from being known.—I have, ſince my appearance at the town, received viſits from ſome of the peaſantry,

ſantry, who have been more courageous and more curious than their companions.

" I had now but one wiſh to be gratified, which was to ſee lord Albourne and his child, if living.—The good father had, by my deſire, wrote to his lordſhip, ſome time after my retirement; but we received no anſwer.—He wrote again; but this letter proved as fruitleſs as the former.—His illneſs and death prevented a third from being ſent:—the only conjecture I could form, to make me ſuppoſe both letters had miſcarried, was that, in caſe of his lordſhip's death, I ſhould have received an anſwer to them by ſome one inveſted with the management of his affairs.—Father Phineas had tranſmitted all my money to a very reſpectable relation of his in France, an eminent banker, under a feigned name; and with this gentleman was alſo placed my will, wherein I had bequeathed the whole of my fortune to lord Albourne and his child, if living,—if not, to be divided equally among ſix convents in France, and a conſiderable ſum to be given to the poor.

" Lord Albourne, his child, and the recollection of almoſt every one that had been dear to me, in a great meaſure vaniſhed from my mind, in the ſpace of ten years.—Wholly abſorbed in an enthuſiaſtic mode of living, I became indifferent to every thing in the world, and obtained a ſerenity to which I had before been

been a ſtranger.—I kept a conſtant watch upon the abbey, though I did not enter it for ſometimes ſix months together:—yet at theſe times I could ſee no one had intruded there ſince my laſt viſit.

"I remained in this ſtate for near twenty years, when, the ſecond night, as I ſuppoſe, that you were at the abbey,—walking rather later than uſual, meditating on the events of my paſt life, which ſeemed like a fleeting dream to my imagination,—my reverie was ſuddenly interrupted by a glare of light from one of the windows on the eaſt ſide of the building.—I ſtopped involuntarily; and a kind of horror, I had long been a ſtranger to, crept through every vein.—I ſtood ſome minutes, as if fixed to the earth: but knowing I could do nothing then, I made the beſt of my way to the cave, though unable to ſleep the remainder of the night, from the ideas that tormented me.

"In the morning I roſe, haraſſed and diſtreſſed.—I firſt determined, if poſſible, to ſeek out who and what the inhabitants were, as I could more eaſily find out the beſt methods to terrify them from it, according to my oath, which I ſtill reſolved ſtrictly to adhere to.—I went through the ſubterraneous paſſage to the room, and from thence aſcended to the apartment above, the next to this, in which you were all four aſſembled.

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"I could not perceive the features of any perſon, but found you had taken up your reſidence here only two nights.—I determined to begin my operations without heſitation,—and accordingly, the latter part of the evening of the ſame day, repaired to the weſt tower, and at midnight, in one of the caſements, exhibited the lamp. This ceremony I performed the next night, and paſſed the window in a manner which I was certain muſt cauſe alarm, if I was ſeen.—Having done this, I returned to my cave, with ſcarcely a doubt but I had frightened the viſitors from their abode.

"I found myſelf, however, miſtaken; for the next morning, in the ſubterraneous room, I heard voices, but did not then aſcend to the upper apartment. I attended rather earlier than uſual at night, found you had not retired to reſt, but were at ſupper.—I placed my lamp below, and waited above, though unable to obſerve any one, the folding doors being quite cloſed.

"The night was ſtormy, (you, no doubt, well recollect it) and I afterwards regretted the uneaſineſs I had cauſed the female part of the company.—The behaviour of Mr. Maſerini appeared ſtrange and boiſterous:—in ſhort, I immediately conjectured he had been drinking freely.—The conception was, I believe, right; and I muſt confeſs, at that time, it gave me no high opinion of his character.—In conſequence of this idea, I did what I ſhould otherwiſe, perhaps, have omitted.

"On

"On my firſt entrance, I heard him call for lights.—His ſiſter in vain perſuaded him to retire to reſt; he ſwallowed ſeveral bumpers of wine after each other, with the avidity of a madman:—at length he called a name which ſtruck me almoſt ſenſeleſs. I uttered an exclamation of horror, which was drowned by a very loud clap of thunder that burſt over the abbey at that time.—My flighty imagination, wounded by a degree of returning inſanity, urged me to think that the name of my daughter was mentioned to hurt my feelings; and this vague thought ſpurred me to terrify the author of it with more than uſual inclination.—The armour that had been thrown down by Jaſper at the time we were viewing the abbey with ſignor Ranolpho, had been gathered together, and placed in the ſubterraneous room.—I deſcended, and ſoon heard him drink to the 'old ghoſt that inhabited the abbey;' upon which I directly puſhed againſt the pile with all my force:—it fell to the ground,—and, as it did before, made a moſt violent craſh.

"I immediately aſcended to hear what emotions it had cauſed.—I heard all in confuſion:—every one ſeemed by the noiſe to have removed from their ſeats; upon which I immediately placed myſelf upon the trap, ready to ſink on a ſudden, if required.

"Mr. Maſerini uttered the name of his father—I groaned.

"He

"He heard it, and declared he would find from whence it came: but ſome one ſeemed to hold him.—I repeated the groan.

"Two perſons approached the folding doors; they flew open:——I ſtopped juſt time enough to be ſeen, and then vaniſhed.

"Thus ended a night, no doubt, to you, of the greateſt horror and diſtreſs,——to me of the keeneſt anguiſh and reflection; which weighing on my mind, prevented the refreſhment of ſleep: ——in ſhort, the next day I was unable to leave my bed, or take any account of the abbey.

"The following morning, as I was at my prayers, you all entered on me rather ſuddenly. I, as uſual, prayed for the forgivenneſs of the ſin I had been guilty of, in the attempt to deprive myſelf of exiſtence.—I had an uncommon oppreſſion on my ſpirits; and tears which I could not ſtifle, flowed at the recollection of events in the early part of life.——I turned my head, and obſerved four perſons aſſembled round, two of whom bore ſo ſtrong a reſemblance to the picture of the late count Orlando Maſerini, that, weak with indiſpoſition, and overcome by my own ideas, I fell ſenſeleſs on the floor.——Even on my recovery from this fit, I did not, I believe, rightly recover my ſcattered ſenſes:——you took your leave, and promiſed to viſit me the next day.

"I ſuppoſed you were inhabitants of the abbey, and had but little doubt of your near relationſhip to the family of Maſerini.—My very ſoul

ſeemed

ſeemed to cling to you: but my oath again came to my imagination, and I dreaded even the very thought of breaking it.—I conſidered, if I could but adhere to that, and ſtill be of ſervice to you, I might yet die with ſome degree of happineſs.——At night, as uſual, I diſplayed the light in the weſt tower, and afterwards returned to my cave.

"According to promiſe, yon were with me in the morning.——We diſcourſed on ſeveral ſubjects:——Mr. Maſerini mentioned Graſville Abbey; I found myſelf confuſed, and thought I could alſo perceive ſymptoms of embarraſſment and terror in the countenances of all.—Indiſpoſition again prevented me from attending with the light in the weſt tower at night.——In the afternoon of the next day you viſited me again—and, no doubt, well remember our converſation.

"I adviſed you not to enter the abbey.——Mr. Maſerini anſwered me rather warmly, and I found myſelf hurt: he immediately apologiſed, and we parted.——I was again, at night, neceſſitated to defer the ceremony of the light, by an unexpected event, which I ſhall hereafter make known.

"The next day you viſited my cave; but I was abſent on the buſineſs of the preceding evening.——At midnight, however, I diſplayed the light in the weſt tower, and could plainly perceive ſome one move with a lantern in the court below.——Suppoſing by this, that you were none of you then retired to reſt, I conceived, that, in a little

little time, I might venture through the apartment where you ſlept" (turning to Matilda) "to one which I have diſtinguiſhed by the name of the ſtate-chamber, which contains the beavers, feathers, &c. and which was formerly hung with black, to receive the corpſe of Orlando count Maſerini, for the ſhort interval of time before he was interred.

"There is a door artfully concealed on one ſide of Miſs Maſerini's bed, which cannot poſſibly be diſcovered, on account of the tapeſtry that covers it:——this opening leads to a private paſſage that communicates immediately with the ſtairs of the weſt tower; for I wiſhed to get to the ſtate-chamber, without appearing on the ground-floor of the abbey, where I naturally conceived you all were.—This door I ſoftly unclоſed.—I thought I heard a ſigh, and my own feelings prompted me to anſwer it twice:——yet I ventured further, till I ſuppoſed the reflection of my figure with the lamp was ſeen in a large pier glaſs directly oppoſite to where I ſtood.—I heard a violent ſhriek, and haſtily retired.

"I knew the key of the cabinet in this room was placed by myſelf on the remains of a decayed column in the ſtate-chamber.——I had fixed the ſilver chain, which was hung to it, to a marble hand, which I found by chance among the broken ornaments that lay about the different apartments;—the cap of the pillar, however, entirely concealed it from view.——I had examined this

cabinet,

cabinet, and knew there was money, jewels, &c. in it, but never ſaw the manuſcript.——The only account I can give for its being concealed there, is, that it muſt have been found by one of the aſſaſſins in the abbey, who (not knowing the contents, by its being wrote, perhaps, in a different language from his own) careleſsly placed it in an obſcure drawer of the cabinet; and was prevented, probably, from robbing the other parts of it, by the dread of count D'Ollifont's reſentment, or from haſte in not examining any further than where he placed the paper.——Suffice it to ſay, that, after Jaſper's death, I found the key of it in the weſt tower; and, taking only a ſuperficial view of what it contained, fixed it in the manner and place I have before mentioned.—I wiſhed to put you in poſſeſſion of it, that without violating my oath, I might in ſome reſpects aſſiſt you.——It was for this purpoſe I was going to the ſtate-chamber, with an intention of moving it into Mr. Maſerini's room.—Being fully convinced that all were retired to reſt, I left the abbey, determining to put this ſcheme in execution the next morning.

" I accordingly attended at an early hour, and walked directly to the concealed door; when, ſtopping a moment to liſten, I heard Mr. Maſerini and his ſiſter in converſation, and found he reſolved to watch in the weſt tower that night.—I, at a particular part of his obſervations, interrupted him, by pronouncing three times, with an

energetic

energetic voice' 'Go!' to the inexpreſſible horror of both.

"A thought now entered my imagination, that I might bring every thing relative to the abbey, partly to a criſis, and ſtill adhere to the vow I had made.—I reſolved to let the key of the cabinet remain in the ſame place, and at night appear to Mr. Maſerini, in the apartment of the weſt tower; conceiving, that if his reſolution failed him in point of ſeizing me and diſcovering the deception, I could find means to lead him to the ſtate-chamber and there diſcover to him the key. —This, though at firſt it may ſeem equivocal, I was certain would in no degree infringe on the general tendency of my oath.

"I entered the abbey at midnight, but ſtopped at leaſt an hour in the lower rooms of the tower, before I made my appearance in the upper one.——At length, however, I aſcended to it, by means of one of the ſame ſort of traps which are contrived in the upper part of the building.

"I ſtood before him about a minute; but hearing ſome one on the ſtair-caſe, immediately, by the ſame means, vaniſhed from his ſight.

"My ſcheme, in ſome meaſure, being fruſtrated, I made the beſt of my way to the ſtate-chamber, through the private paſſage I have before mentioned:—wiſhing to regain the key of the cabinet, I wanted more light than my lamp, and accordingly lighted thoſe tapers that were placed in the

the different glaſſes.—I had no ſooner done this, than I heard ſome footſteps approach the door :—I immediately concealed myſelf behind the column that contained what I have before mentioned—The voices, I found, were thoſe of the inhabitants of the abbey.—The night was extremely ſtormy ; and a kind of ſhock, ſimilar to that of an earthquake, ſeemed to take effect on the room where we ſtood.——I availed myſelf of this circumſtance, and immediately puſhed the cap of the column down, which directly diſcovered the marble hand, and key ſuſpended from it.——Mr. Maſerini by theſe means procured it.——I then came forward and ſtood on the trap, claſped my hands with ecſtaſy, and deſcended through the floor.

" The next morning you all viſited me :——I was looking over ſome papers, of infinite conſequence to your welfare ; but it was not then a time for diſcovery.—I was, if you recollect, ſuddenly taken ill, with a kind of fit I have for years been ſubject to : I prayed that my life might be prolonged till a mighty work was effected, which was to procure juſtice for the murder of Percival Maſerini, and reſtore his children to their rights.

" I had no doubt but Mr. Maſerini would again watch in the weſt tower that night ; and I accordingly appeared there in the ſame manner as before.——His behaviour anſwered my purpoſe : he ſeized me, and diſcovered my perſon :—ſecrecy,

in

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in

in my ideas, was now at an end:—an explanation took place:——I, however, put off a regular detail of events till another period, but gave him hopes of once more being reſtoted to tbe world and happineſs, in a manner that would at once wipe off every ſtigma that had ſo long defamed his character.

"He viſited me the next afternoon, but did not ſtop long, and only received from me further proofs that I had power and will to ſerve him.—I received another viſit from Miſs Maſerini alone, at midnight.—My ſurpriſe may well be conceived: the interview was occaſioned by her finding of the manuſcript.—I promiſed to wait on her in the morning, and explain every circumſtance, as far as I was capable.—This promiſe I have now fulfilled, by relating every principal event of my paſt life, which has been chequered with ſcenes of happineſs contraſted with thoſe of the moſt poignant miſery and diſtreſs."

Thus ended the hermit's tale, who, for an act of the greateſt generoſity to a villain, fell under the laſh of the ſevereſt misfortunes.

A total inconſiſtency of conduct, however, may be obſerved through the latter part of his life,——occaſioned, moſt probably, by a nervous conſtitution, entirely broken by adverſity; for it was certainly ſtrange that a man of enlightened underſtanding, and refined education, ſhould ſo cloſely adhere to an oath, tyrannically (as it may be

be ſaid) forced on him by an act of the blackeſt ingratitude and injuſtice; and at the ſame time reconcile himſelf to a premeditated plot of diſcovering his perſon; which he knew muſt conſequently develope every tranſaction.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XV.

### MISCELLANEOUS OCCURRENCES.

"*The love of wicked fiends converts to fear;*
*That fear to hate, and hate turns one or both*
*To worthy danger, and deſerved death.*"

SHAKESPEARE, *Richard II.*

THE miſt of doubtful horror, which had ſo long brooded over the apartments of Graſville Abbey, was now totally diſperſed, and the gloom of ſuperſtitious weakneſs diſpelled by the bright ray of truth and reaſon.——The inhabitants, in ſome degree, wondered at the fears that had aſſailed them; and could not, even for a moment, reflect on them, but with a mixture of contempt and vexation at their want of fortitude to withſtand the ſhock of mere viſionary terrors.

Tbe baron Sampieno received the united thanks of the whole company for his recital; Matilda and Agnes dropped a tear at the misfortunes of the venerable orator.—A ſenſation, however, they had long been ſtrangers to, of delight and comfort, ran through the whole aſſembly.——Every myſtery, every ſupernatural idea, was elucidated

dated to their ſatisfaction, and at once relieved them from that load of anxiety and diſtreſs they had ſo long encouraged by gloomy apprehenſions.—In the courſe of the converſation, Matilda alſo underſtood that the anſwer ſhe ſuppoſed to be given to her thoughts the night before as ſhe entered the cave, was nothing more than an involuntary exclamation of the hermit's, which (by the conſtruction of the place) echoed to the part where ſhe ſtood, in a kind of whiſper.

After having taken ſome refreſhments, lord Milverne declared his intention of ſetting off to the reſidence of the magiſtrate, as the critical ſituation of Felix demanded that the banditti ſhould be immediately apprehended.——It was reſolved that Leonard ſhould attend him, as, in ſome parts of the information, he might be uſeful.——They accordingly departed, and were not expected to return till the evening, as they would be neceſſitated to accompany the guards to the ſpot, and afterwards be preſent at the examination.

The baron now began, to Alfred and his ſiſter, another narrative, which, though ſhorter, gave them nearly as much ſurpriſe and pleaſure as the former.

One night, which he mentioned, neglecting to ſhow the light in the weſt tower, he was, at an early hour, called by a voice that he had ſomewhere heard, and which ſeemed to come from the outer part of the cave.—He immediately repaired to the ſpot, and perceived a man whoſe countenance he directly knew:—he was a pea-

ſant that had ſometimes viſited him, but who had latterly not ſo often attended, on account of the indiſpoſition of a relation. The man's features carried in them the utmoſt horror and affright, occaſioned by three cauſes:——firſt, his relation was dying, as he ſuppoſed; ſecondly, though he had often called upon the hermit by day-light, he had never before ventured near his habitation after dark, on account of the path leading directly to the abbey, conſequently was under conſiderable alarm; and, thirdly, that alarm was heightened beyond meaſure, by ſeeing a light in one of the caſements of that building, which occaſioned his calling on the hermit's name, being unable to proceed any further.

With breathleſs agitation the poor fellow related what he had ſeen, and then requeſted father Peter would accompany him to his cot, as he was woefully afraid ſomething lay heavy on the mind of the ſick man that was there; who had expreſſed a wiſh to ſee a confeſſor:—none, however, being there to be found, he thought of father Peter, and had even ventured, at that hour, to procure him.

The baron, after ſome heſitation, conſented to go with him; and they accordingly walked to this man's home, where he was conducted to a room, in which, on a miſerable bed, lay an emaciated figure extended, and ſeemingly in the laſt ſtate of conſumption.—His face was of a deadly paleneſs; his cheeks, ſunk to the very bone, were covered with a ſhrivelled ſkin; while thoſe parts

of

of his eyes which had once been white, were turned to a kind of pale yellow; his noſe and mouth, which had been no bad features, now appeared predominant ones, owing to the thinneſs of his face; while in his whole perſon was painted anguiſh and remorſe in the extreme, and a gloom at intervals, which ſhowed, all joy, all hope, had forſaken his ſoul.——What were the ſenſations of the baron, when this change, great as it was, did not prevent him from recogniſing the wretch Eburne!——Ah! and what were the ſenſations of that Eburne, when he beheld and recollected, under the garb of a hermit, the much-injured baron Sampieno!——He ſhrieked aloud, and hid his face below the bed-clothes.——The cottagers were aſtoniſhed:——the baron deſired they would leave the room; which they accordingly did.

After a few minutes, hearing every thing quiet, the wretched man raiſed himſelf; but the delirious fit he had laboured under for ſome days before, now returned with violence.—His black ſhaggy hair, diſcompoſed by the efforts he had made to hide from his ſight the figure before him, gave a double horror to his ghaſtly looks, which carried in them every appearance of inſanity.—— He raved, called on the names of count Maſerini and his children,—then the baron Sampieno,—— wept, and, clenching his hands together, ſunk on the bed, exhauſted and fatigued.—The baron well knew it was uſeleſs to attempt to ſpeak while this fit of a guilty conſcience remained:——he was

therefore a ſilent ſpectator of the ſcene, and greatly affected.

After the violent ravings of Eburne had ceaſed, he lay panting on the bed, with his eyes fixed on a vacant part of the chamber.——The baron conceived this would be a good opportunity to addreſs him:—he therefore drew near the bed; but Eburne again ſhrunk from him, and put out his hand, as if ſtruck with horror at his approach.——The good man ſpoke in the mildeſt terms, and begged he would be compoſed:——again the languiſhing eye of the culprit were raiſed towards the venerable comforter; and again he ſhrunk back, as if the figure brought to his mind ideas that rent his very ſoul.

Two hours elapſed, during which time the baron addreſſed him on ſeveral topics relative to religion; and his diſordered intellects gradually became more connected and regular, though he, almoſt every five minutes, gave a convulſive ſhudder, and a loud ſigh of anguiſh and regret.

At length the baron promiſed to call on him the next day, and left the chamber.——He deſired the cottager not to diſturb his relation; but, at day-break, to ſend for the moſt eminent phyſician they could procure; and he would make up to them the expenſe.——With many thanks, they promiſed to do as he deſired.——He accordingly left the cottage; and, it being conſiderably paſt the time of illumining the tower, immediately on his return to the cave, retired to reſt.

The

The remainder of the night was ſpent in a train of melancholy reflections on this ſtrange accident.——The ſight of this man brought to his mind thoſe ſcenes of felicity and happineſs which he and his diabolical maſter had for ever blaſted: yet, after the ſtate in which he had beheld the miſerable wretch, pity, in oppoſition to thoſe reflections, entered his boſom; and thoſe very ſcenes, as they the more confirmed his wickedneſs, ſeemed to draw from the benevolent heart of the baron greater concern and ſorrow for his dreadful ſituation.——It was neceſſary, however, if Eburne ſurvived till morning (which ſeemed rather doubtful), that he ſhould be got into as compoſed a ſtate as poſſible, and that by perſuaſion (if perſuaſion ſhould be found neceſſary) he ſhould do what juſtice he could to the offſpring of that family which he moſt probably had aided to deſtroy.——The baron conſidered that he might be acquainted with the whole of D'Ollifont's tranſactions; if therefore, he could be brought to give an explanation of them, his words might be taken down in writing; and ſuch a confeſſion (if it could be proved by reſpectable witneſſes who could anſwer for his being in a ſtate of inſanity) would nearly tend to anſwer every wiſhed-for purpoſe.

Such were the baron's thoughts; and at an early hour he repaired to the cottage.——A phyſician of ſome eminence was already arrived:—he gave but little hopes of the patient, but ſaid he might probably ſurvive a few days.——Eburne had

had enjoyed conſiderable ſleep for ſome hours, and ſeemed perfectly calm.——The phyſician departed, after promiſing to call again in the evening.

The baron now took the man who belonged to the cottage, on one ſide, and requeſted to know what relation Eburne was to him.——The man anſwered, he was a couſin of his wife's; they had always underſtood he led a very wicked life; nor had any acquaintance been kept up between them for many years, till about ſix months paſt, when he came to their cottage, very much diſtreſſed in mind, and labouring under every ſymptom of a decline.——He fully confeſſed to them that he had been a moſt abandoned character, and claimed their pity.——The cottager and his wife accordingly admitted him into their houſe; but, as his health gradually grew worſe, his melancholy increaſed.——He, however, made his will, and left them the whole of the little property he was poſſeſſed of.

"Laſt night," continued the man, "he was ſuddenly taken much worſe than we had ever before ſeen him (though he has at times been deranged in his intellects for ſome days paſt), and begged I would bring him a confeſſor:——I accordingly ſet off for father Leolin; but I found he was ſome miles from Montferrat.——I then thought your preſence would anſwer the ſame purpoſe:"

The baron deſired the cottager to go into the chamber of the ſick man, and mildly inform him

him that father Peter had called to ſee him; that he would give him no uneaſineſs, but rather comfort and conſolation.

The man did as he was deſired, and in about five minutes returned. "Eburne," ſaid he, "is perfectly ſenſible, and wiſhes to ſee you:——but I am ſure there is ſomething ſtrange about him; for, when I only mentioned your name, he ſtarted, as if afraid of being murdered."

The baron entered the room alone.——Eburne again convulſively ſhook at the ſight of him; but, being addreſſed by the mild and condoling voice of the viſitor, he ſo far recovered as to look on him, and liſten to what he ſaid, without any violent emotions.

The baron, after an hour's converſation with him, which ſeemed entirely to compoſe his mind, conceived he might venture on a topic it was before impoſſible for him to mention, concerning the murder of Percival Maſerini, and alſo of thoſe doubts relative to the count his father.——He opened the ſubject with ſuch caution and mildneſs, that, though the remembrance might be ſeen to work in every feature of Eburne's face, he did not fall into any fits of inſanity, but continued perfectly collected during the whole of the interrogation.

At the cloſe of it, he heaved a ſigh of the moſt acute anguiſh and horror, and in ſome meaſure relieved his burſting ſoul by a flood of tears:—— At length he recovered ſo far as to ſpeak, and de-

declared that Orlando count Maſerini was poiſoned; and that Percival Maſerini, his ſon, was aſſaſſinated in Graſville Abbey, after having been kept there a priſoner ſome little time:——" and, however," ſaid he, 'I may break the oath I have taken, I can no longer conceal the murderer:—it was my late maſter, the count D'Ollifont.——But," continued the unhappy man, "I am equally culpable with him.——I was privy to both tranſactions, and to every plot of villany he was concerned in, particularly that by which you were ſo great a ſufferer.——Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, claſping his hands in agony, "thou only knoweſt what are my ſufferings.——It is thou only canſt conceive the pangs which drive me to madneſs."

He was near fainting:——but the baron adminiſtered a cordial, which ſoon recovered him.——He now informed Eburne that there was one eſſential way of atoning for his guilt; and that was to do juſtice to the deſcendants of the deceaſed; for this purpoſe it was neceſſary, as his life was uncertain, that a paper ſhould be drawn up, declaring the facts relative to both murders, which in the court of juſtice would be certain to cruſh the wretch that was the cauſe of them, and give to the children of the injured thoſe poſſeſſions they had ſo long unlawfully been deprived of.——Eburne gladly and immediately conſented to the propoſal, and the more particularly ſo, when it was explained to him that the breaking of an

oath

oath in ſuch a caſe could not be deemed an act of wickedneſs, or be diſapproved of by the Supreme.——The baron then drew up a paper containing all the circumſtances which were related to him by Eburne, before father Leolin, who was now arrived, and acquainted with the affair.

In the evening the phyſician arrived; and before him and the cottager, Eburne ſigned the paper, declaring it, on oath, to be the truth of every tranſaction it contained.——Eburne ſeemed conſiderably better, and after ſome little time the whole company departed; the baron taking poſſeſſion of the paper, which was the ſame he was looking over when viſited by the inhabitants of the abbey.

The confeſſion it held forth was partly as follows:—That he was taken into the ſervice of D'Ollifont when very young, ſhortly after that gentleman commenced gambler in Spain.——He was ſoon diſtinguiſhed as his confidential ſervant, and aſſiſted him in moſt of his defrauds:——that they led that kind of life till his maſter's character was well known in thoſe parts, where he reſided for ſome time:—that they were neceſſitated to fly to the place where the baron Sampieno and his family reſided, and, knowing his riches, determined, if poſſible, to make him a dupe to their artifice; inſinuating himſelf into the baron's family, though he bore a deadly hatred to that nobleman:——This hatred he reſolved to gratify by a diabolical ſcheme of malice and vil-

lany.——He determined to take away by force Lucretia, the baron's only daughter; and, by ruining her honour, to make a public diſgrace and ignominy fall upon her father, which he knew would more effectually blaſt his happineſs than any pecuniary fraud he could invent.——This ſcheme was fruſtrated by the baron's overhearing a converſation which he and his maſter had on that ſubject: but which gave riſe to another opportunity for D'Ollifont to execute a ſecond fiend-like contrivance, which tended to the ſame horrid purpoſe, and which, if poſſible, exceeded the former one in ingenuity and contrivance.

The manner and iſſue of this horrid plot againſt the baron was related by himſelf, and the ſucceſs of it anſwered but too well.

Eburne confeſſed in the teſtimony, that he was the perſon who found means to bury ſome of the falſe notes in the baron's garden, and who, by D'Ollifont's orders, bribed one of his ſervants to their intereſt.——He attended his maſter to Italy, where the old count Maſerini was extremely alarmed, on account of a report which had been ſpread concerning his children, who had been ſome time in France.——He had been informed that Percival, his ſon, had contrived to rob the convent of N***** of a young lady of family and diſtinction, and that both, with his ſiſter, had fled.——This report ſeemed the more to be credited, as an interval of ſome time had paſſed ſince the count had heard from them.

The

The old gentleman was extremely ill on the arrival of his nephew, but teſtified great pleaſure at ſeeing him, having never heard of his miſconduct.——He ſlowly recovered; and D'Ollifont was diſpatched to procure ſome further intelligence of his children.——It was during this journey that he made Eburne acquainted with his intentions, and promiſed him large rewards if he ſucceeded.——They returned to the abbey with a feigned letter, which gave information that Percival Maſerini and his ſiſter were no more; that the former fell by the hand of an officer who was going to ſecure them,—and that the latter, in a fit of inſanity, had poiſoned herſelf:—the letter concluded with ſaying that lady Clementina was confined in the Baſtile, on a ſuſpicion of having murdered her ſiſter, who was found dead in her bed the morning after the elopement from the convent.

The grief of the count was exceſſive, and brought on a relapſe of his former diſorder;—— and this, added to a ſlow poiſon, which Eburne procured, and which D'Ollifont mixed with every ſmall quantity of food he partook of, put an end to his exiſtence, without any ſigns of murder being committed.——The count made a will about two days before he died, in which he bequeathed the whole of his eſtates and property, except a few legacies, to his nephew.——Eburne, by his maſter's order, gave it out the abbey was haunted; and, the better to make this believed,

D'Ollifont

D'Ollifont himſelf left it ſuddenly in the night after the funeral of his uncle. He returned immediately to Spain, and left orders that nothing ſhould be moved from the abbey.

Eburne, however, was left behind, though it was ſuppoſed round the country that the abbey was entirely free from inhabitants.——He each night ſhowed the light in the weſt tower, and ſecretly employed three mechanics to put the traps and machinery in order.——Theſe works he ſuperintended; and finding one of theſe men, whoſe name was Enuchio, fit for his purpoſe, retained him, by D'Ollifont's deſire, to reſide in the ſubterraneous chamber, and ſhow the light, while Eburne departed for Spain, to come forward on the trial on baron Sampieno.

Eburne alſo confeſſed that the paſſage which formed a communication between the abbey and the cave, the traps &c. were found out by himſelf, and the ſecrets conveyed directly to his maſter, from whom he received a conſiderable preſent.

The paper next contained an account of the terms to which the baron conſented, to ſave the life of himſelf and daughter, which the reader has before been acquainted with; alſo an account of D'Ollifont's entering into a ſociety of depredators while in Italy, whoſe birth and ſituation in life were all above the common rank, and whoſe defrauds were carried to the moſt conſiderable amount on people of rank.——It was at one of their places of rendezvous, at Genoa, where the baron

baron was introduced to D'Ollifont, at the time he took his oath.——After that conference, the latter departed to Spain; but Eburne ſtill remained concealed, as his agent in Montferrat, a watch upon the baron, and every circumſtance which concerned the abbey.——He ſent him information that Percival Maſerini was actually arrived, though, by D'Ollifont's orders, ſeveral men were placed on the roads to aſſaſſinate him.

Immediately that the keys were delivered in Spain, he ſet off from that country and ſecretly arrived at Montferrat, where he kept concealed in the ſubterraneous room, with Eburne, Enuchio, and three men whom he had hired.——It has before been mentioned that the baron was abſent many miles; which anſwered every wiſh of D'Ollifont: but he did not know that Jaſper was left behind.——The reſolution of this party was to ſeize Percival Maſerini and his ſervant, ſhould they ſearch the abbey alone; which it was rather expected they would.——Enuchio and the three men were diſpatched in the daytime, about three miles round the ſpot, each taking different roads, and met at the cave at an appointed hour at dark.

It was about the fifth night, when, after one of theſe excurſions, Enuchio brought word that Percival Maſerini, whom he perſonally knew, with his ſervant, had juſt called at an inn for ſome refreſhment; and, by their manner, he judged they were coming to the abbey, as they did

did not ſeem inclined to ſtop, as it was now late.

Every thing, therefore, was prepared; Enuchio and two of the men were planted in the weſt tower.——Eburne and another man were concealed in the hall; and the count himſelf waited the iſſue of the ſcheme, in the tomb, in which the unhappy victim was to be ſhut up.——He entered the abbey, agreeable to their expectations, even unattended by his ſervant; and croſſed the hall without any interruption.——Eburne being now certain he was within their power, he and his companion joned the count, while the unfortunate Percival aſcended to the weſt tower.

On his entrance, he was immediately ſeized by the ruffians:——in the ſtruggle, a picture of his wife was torn by force from his boſom, with a part of the ribbon; and ſeveral drops of blood, proceeding from a blow which he received in the face, ſtained the floor:——theſe were diſcovered by Edward, his man, when he made a ſearch after his maſter in the morning; and alſo by ſignor Balvolio, the officers of juſtice, and other perſons, who attended the abbey for the ſame purpoſe afterwards.——Percival Maſerini was conveyed down to the cell deſcribed by the baron, and diſcovered by Jaſper; and a ſhort allowance of food was given him each night.

A few days after, Jaſper was diſcovered to be left behind in Montferrat; and it was determined he ſhould be made away with or at leaſt

leaſt ſo far hurt as to prevent any interruption from him.——Eburne and two of the men aſſaulted him in one of the private avenues leading to the front gates, and left him for dead.

The next night, it was reſolved between Eburne and his maſter, that a period ſhould be put to the life of their wretched priſoner, for fear of the baron's return. D'Ollifont, however, did not wiſh any one of the men to be privy to the actual commitment of the murder:——Enuchio and the others were therefore diſcharged with large preſents, and, by his deſire, departed to Spain:—there they were ſeized, through the agency of an alguaſil with whom he was connected, put a-board a ſhip of war, and fell in the firſt engagement.

At midnight D'Ollifont, with his own hand, ſtabbed his couſin Percival Maſerini; Eburne being unable to perpetrate this laſt deed of darkneſs, though he aſſiſted:—poiſon was at firſt offered the unhappy man; but, on refuſing to take it, he received the wound which at once releaſed him from a wretched exiſtence.

Eburne and his diabolical employer buried the body near the tomb, in a grave which had been prepared in the day; and then, placing every thing in the abbey as it was before they came, departed, and in diſguiſe returned to Spain.

Here Eburne received a conſiderable ſum from D'Ollifont, and remained in his ſervice about ſix months; when he was one night ſuddenly ſeized, and carried on board a ſimilar ſhip to that

that in which his companions were conveyed; but, fortunately, did not meet with the ſame fate.——He eſcaped from the crew, after twelve months, and entered into ſervice in France; being deterred from making what he knew public relative to the count, on the idea of the ſtrong oath he had taken to the contrary.——He had not a doubt but it was through his means, he was, by force, taken from Spain; and his very ſoul recoiled againſt him, for thoſe very ſchemes he had aided him in executing.

He was driven from France, by hearing of D'Ollifont's arrival there, and croſſed over to England, torn with remorſe, and harraſſed by a guilty conſcience.——He was often tempted, in defiance of the oath he had taken, to impeach his late maſter; but the doubt how ſuch an accuſation might be received from him, againſt one who was every day growing more popular in Paris, prevented this act of juſtice.——He reſided in England ſome years, as ſervant to a private gentleman; but was again neceſſitated to fly, on being informed that D'Ollifont was there likewiſe; dreading the power and inclination he had to rid the world of one who was privy to ſo many of his crimes.——He therefore made the beſt of his way back to France, and from thence ſoon returned to Italy, where he made himſelf known to his relations, and claimed their pity; finding his health totally declined, and his mind loaded with horror, anxiety, and bitter remorſe.

To this purport was the paper which the baron now delivered to Alfred Maſerini:——it was a precious gift; for it would moſt likely tend, with correſpondent evidence, to ſubdue the inveterate and malicious foe of their family, while it procured them that comfort and affluence which they had ſo long been deprived of.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XVI.

THE baron further informed them, that Eburne in the courſe of two days ſo far recovered as to be able to ſit up for ſome hours; but after his confeſſion, he ſeemed to expreſs ſuch an impatience for his diſſolution, as indicated his mind was in ſome degree diſordered; and on the third morning after, he was diſcovered hanging by a cord, which he had found means to procure from a part of his bed, and fixed to a hook in the ceiling; thus adding another crime to the many that he had already committed, by an act of ſuicide.

The concluſion of this man's life held forth a ſtriking leſſon of villany and cruelty; his deſtroying of that exiſtence which he had every reaſon to ſuppoſe had nearly run its courſe, confirmed at once how much he ſuffered from the horrors of a guilty conſcience, and the effects of a truly vicious mind.

As there was now no doubt but the abbey, with all the poſſeſſions and eſtates belonging to it, was the ſole and lawful right of Alfred and his ſiſter, no ſcruples of honour could prevent them from making uſe of the money and other valuables that were in the cabinet: but as the baron conſidered that the whole buſineſs muſt go under

under a regular courſe of inſpection before the government, and count D'Ollifont be brought in the face of his country to anſwer for thoſe crimes which could now be partly proved againſt him (though the facts did not actually amount to demonſtration), they conceived it would be better to let every article remain in the ſame place.

The baron inſiſted on their receiving from him ſupplies neceſſary for their preſent demands.—— It was, he ſaid, his intention, if poſſible, publicly to clear that part of his character, which had for ſo many years remained under the aſperſions of a villain; and bring his accuſations againſt D'Ollifont, on the foundation of Eburne's manuſcript, which explained events relative to that affair, with as much accuracy as it did the circumſtances reſpecting count Maſerini and his children.

The baron wrote to his banker in Paris, who was poſſeſſed of his property, for remittances; giving him notice at the ſame time, that he ſhould ſhortly appear in perſon, to demand the whole of his fortune.——The old gentleman conſented to the entreaties of Alfred and his ſiſter to remain in the abbey, as they could eaſily have a bed made up for him in a chamber next to Alfred's.

In the latter part of the day, Lord Milverne returned with Leonard and Felix: his lordſhip informed them that the banditti were taken, the men who had aſſiſted him were ſingled out, releaſed, and received from him a handſome reward, while the others were reſerved for a public trial.—

Lord

Lord Milverne had ſpoken to the magiſtrate (whoſe politeneſs was extreme) concerning Alfred Maſerini's affairs ;——he appointed to ſee him, with his lordſhip, the next morning, and promiſed to take every method in his power, to recover for them their juſt and lawful right.

His lordſhip was much ſurpriſed and pleaſed to hear the account of Eburne, and the manuſcript they had got in their poſſeſſion.——He congratulated them on the hopes of a very ſpeedy end to their misfortunes :——nor was the baron leſs pleaſed to hear that his ſon-in-law lord Albourne, and the daughter of his once beloved Lucretia, were both known to Alfred and Matilda.—Pleaſure beamed in his countenance, when the former ſpoke of her with the rapturous praiſes of a lover.

Leonard on his return was diſpatched with the letter.—In it the baron requeſted of his banker to remit him the ſum for which he wrote, by the ſpeedieſt conveyance.—Lord Milverne partook of Alfred's bed ; another was made up for the baron, and a third contrived below for Leonard and Felix.

The happy party aſſembled at breakfaſt at an early hour the next morning ; after which they employed themſelves in taking a regular ſurvey of the abbey ; and the baron explained to them thoſe pieces of mechaniſm it contained, which now fully accounted for the ſtrange things they had been witneſs to.——They alſo deſcended to the ſubterraneous room, and from thence walked to the cave, from which all the articles that the

baron

baron wiſhed to preſerve, were carried to the abbey by Leonard and Felix.

Alfred, lord Milverne, and the baron, now ſet off for the magiſtrate, attended by Leonard.—— Matilda and Agnes dined alone: and though the latter would ſometimes ſurvey the gothic ſtructure of the room, it was with that degree of pleaſure and confidence, which confirmed how well ſhe was ſatisfied that every fear ſhe had before encouraged was groundleſs.

"I am now, mademoiſelle," ſaid ſhe to Matilda, "happy indeed; and I may truly ſay that this happpineſs is increaſed by ſeeing all around me ſo: in ſhort, I know nothing that could add to my preſent felicity but ...." Here ſhe ſtammered; the bluſh of true innocence glowed on her cheek, and heightened that pleaſing ſimplicity which graced every feature.

Matilda gueſſed the cauſe of this embarraſſment, and archly reminded her of Oliver.

The poor girl burſt into tear ——

"Indeed, mademoiſelle, though I own I love Oliver, yet even the preſence of my poor mother, however ſhe may in ſome reſpects have treated me, would add to my preſent joy."

Matilda was ſtruck with her gratitude, and commended it.

"Both your wiſhes, Agnes," ſaid ſhe, "ſhall, if in my power, be gratified.—Your mother ſhall be reconciled to your marriage with Oliver, by my making him a preſent that ſhall give him importance enough to gain her good will."

"A

"A thouſand bleſſings on you, mademoiſelle!—I know not how to thank you, unleſs you will look on theſe tears as in ſome degree an acknowledgment for your goodneſs."

Felix now entered the room to take away the dinner things; which put an end to the converſation.

The latter part of the day, Alfred and his friends returned.—They brought with them two Italian women ſervants. One of the lower apartments was fixed for their kitchen, and they ſlept in a ſmall room next to Matilda's chamber.—The magiſtrate had given them every hope of a ſpeedy iſſue to their cauſe.—By their orders he was the next day to ſend off an arreſt againſt count D'Ollifont, to detain his perſon wherever found, on three ſeveral charges,—firſt, for the murder of his uncle the count Orlando Maſerini, ſecond, for the murder of his couſin Percival Maſerini, and unlawfully detaining the property of his heirs to his own uſe.

The third charge was in the name of the baron Sampieno, for falſe accuſations, and defamation of character.

The magiſtrate informed them that the count's power in France was no more: he had offended the royal party by an attempt to aſſaſſinate one of their claſs, and in ſhort was in every reſpect no more than a priſoner in the country, being afraid to leave it, though by no means wiſhing to remain there.

This

This gentleman's politeneſs was extreme; he offered the ſervices of himſelf and lady to introduce them into public, under their proper names; which was now in many reſpects abſolutely neceſſary.——The next day was appointed for Matilda to viſit them.——The fore part of the following morning the baron propoſed a walk to the cottage of Eburne's relations, as he conceived both Alfred and Matilda ſhould be made known to them, as well as to the phyſician and father Leolin.——They accordingly viſited thoſe perſons; and all of them declared their readineſs to come forward in their behalf.

After this walk they ſet off for ſignor Salvarino's, the magiſtrate's.——Agnes, however, declined the invitation to attend them, as it was her intention to ſee ſome things put in order by the ſervants, neceſſary for the reception of a large party, which Alfred had reſolved to entertain before he left the abbey.

They were received by ſignor Salvarino and his lady with the utmoſt politeneſs:—ſome of the principal perſons of the place were aſſembled, purpoſely to be introduced to the baron and the young recluſes;——and all teſtified their joy that the right heirs of the Maſerini family were now likely to be reſtored to the poſſeſſions of their anceſtors.—Alfred was informed that diſpatches againſt D'Ollifont were already ſent off, and a regular proceſs in their behalf commenced againſt him.——In the evening they attended a public place of entertainment, and received conſiderable

applauſe

applauſe from the audience; for their ſtory had already ſpread through the principal part of Montferrat.

The following day was fixed on by ſignor Salvarino, the baron, and Alfred, for the ſettlement of ſome neceſſary circumſtances relative to the ſuit in hand.—He waited on them at the abbey, and was taken all over it——Every contrivance was explained to him; and he ſhowed the greateſt aſtoniſhment at what he ſaw.——The remainder of the day was dedicated cloſely to buſineſs.—Lord Milverne was abſent on ſome of his own affairs.—In the evening, ſignor Salvarino took his leave, with an invitation to himſelf and lady, with moſt of the perſons who were preſent at his houſe, to ſpend the next day at the abbey.——The whole party accordingly met at the dinner hour:——they ſurveyed the building, and received an elucidation to every myſtery.—Agnes undertook to manage the entertainment; and it was conducted in a manner that did her infinite credit.

They now began to make preparations for leaving Italy, as their preſence would ſhortly be abſolutely neceſſary in France.——It was agreed that lord Milverne ſhould croſs over from that country to England, as he had ſome concerns to ſettle; and, at the ſame time, make inquiries if lord Albourne and his daughter were in London, as they all conceived it probable he might return immediately after the accident of the fire at the inn.—Signor Salvarino procured them an

elderly

elderly man and woman to look after the abbey, and reſide there in their abſence; and in the courſe of a fortnight, they ſet off on their journey, with the two Italian ſervants whom they had hired.

Before their departure the baron received the ſum he had wrote for from his banker, with a polite invitation to his houſe on their arrival at Paris.—They had alſo information that the arreſt was executed againſt D'Ollifont, and that he was now a priſoner in his own houſe.

They travelled ſlowly, and arrived in France without any particular accident.—They engaged handſome apartments. Lord Milverne remained with them but three days, and then tore himſelf from the happy party; not, however, without obtaining a promiſe from Matilda, to become his immediately on his return.—They alſo underſtood that D'Ollifont had been confined to his bed ſome time, and had totally loſt the royal favour.—Since his arreſt he had often ſhown fits of inſanity; and it was doubted by the phyſicians whether he would ſurvive to take his trial.—Signor Salvarino had given them letters of introduction to many perſons of faſhion and diſtinction in France; and thoſe, added to their being known before, procured them admittance to the firſt parties.

Before their arrival, they were informed that the charge againſt Alfred was reſcinded, even previous to the arreſt againſt D'Ollifont.—They

viſited the baron's banker, who introduced them to the whole of his friends.

They had been in Paris about a week, when they one evening attended the theatre:—in leaving of it, as they paſſed through one of the paſſages, a gentleman before them, ſeemingly intoxicated in a ſmall degree, was addreſſing himſelf to a young lady rather againſt her will, though perſonally he appeared to be known to her.—She had an elderly lady with her:—they were, however, before Alfred and the baron; conſequently their faces could not be obſerved.

His importunities at length ſeemed to become exceeding diſagreeable, and his remarks carried in them ſome impropriety.—Alfred advanced, and declared the lady ſhould not be inſulted!—The gentleman turned round, and exclaimed with the utmoſt ſurpriſe,—"Mr. Maſerini!"—nor was Alfred's aſtoniſhment leſs to behold Henry Peviquil.—The young lady turned pale at the name of Maſerini, and ſat down on a ſeat near; which gave Alfred an opportunity to recogniſe lady Caroline Albourne, and the baron the picture of his departed wife and daughter, in the perſon of his grand-child.

Alfred, diſengaging himſelf from the levity of Peviquil, ran to her aſſiſtance: but, before he could catch her in his arms, ſhe had fainted in thoſe of the lady who was with her, and who was totally unknown to both Alfred and his ſiſter.

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The baron and Matilda now advanced.—The former claſped the hand of the inanimate yet beautiful form, with ecſtaſy; but that ecſtaſy cauſed a tear to flow at the recollection of her mother.—A conſiderable crowd of perſons were now aſſembled round:—a gentleman who ſtood by, invited them into a room in the interior part of the theatre; which offer they gladly accepted.—Henry Peviquil, elevated with wine, yet haggard with diſſipation, attempted to follow: but Alfred politely requeſted he would deſiſt:—this he at laſt agreed to; but requeſted his addreſs, that he might call and congratulate him on his return to France.—They accordingly exchanged cards, and he directly left the place.

Matilda privately entreated the baron that he would not diſcover himſelf to lady Caroline that night, as the preſent alarm had ſo greatly overcome her ſpirits.

Alfred hung over the charming invalid with a mixture of joy and concern. Her countenance was much altered ſince he had ſeen her: though her beauty was not greatly diminiſhed, yet it was of that delicate and languiſhing kind which plainly told ſhe had ſuffered the moſt heart-felt and poignant uneaſineſs.—He knew from Caroline Albourne's ſincere and artleſs conduct, that ſhe once loved him; but he alſo knew his character had ſuffered the fevereſt ſhock in the opinion of her father.—She might now be the

wife of another!—The thought no ſooner darted on his brain, than its effects might be obſerved in every feature.—Lady Caroline recovered, and looked round with ſome ſurpriſe on the little party near her.—She claſped the offered hand of Matilda with pleaſure; and her eyes ſpoke towards Alfred, more than ſhe dared to utter.

She had accompanied her father, after the accident of the fire, into Italy; but remained there a very ſhort time.—They then returned to France, as his lordſhip conceived the climate to agree with his conſtitution, which ſtill ſeemed on the decline.—The elderly lady who was with her, had reſided in France all her life, and was a diſtant relation of lord Albourne's, at whoſe houſe his lordſhip now reſided with his daughter.—They had heard of Alfred's arrival at Paris, with the information that the charge againſt him was withdrawn, and another of a very high and criminal nature brought by him againſt D'Ollifont.—But lord Albourne was now by no means ſatisfied with that part of his character which he had formerly been a witneſs to, in point of gambling: nor did he give his daughter the leaſt hopes of a favourable alteration in his ſentiments towards the young Frenchman.—Alfred wiſhed them to permit him to attend them home; but this was abſolutely refuſed, as they had their viſitors and two ſervants in waiting.

Alfred,

Alfred, therefore, had only the conſolation of finding that ſhe was ſtill unmarried, and declaring, as he handed her to the carriage, that in a very ſhort time the whole of his conduct would, he hoped, be explained to lord Albourne ſatisfactorily, and himſelf made the happieſt of men, by being permitted to ſolicit of her that, the very thought of which had ſupported him through every misfortune.

The baron requeſted of the old lady his lordſhip's addreſs, having buſineſs, as he informed her, of great importance with him the following day; and after a rather confuſed farewell, the whole company parted with ſtill more confuſed ideas.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XVII.

### VARIOUS INTERVIEWS.

*Alas, I'm ſore beſet!—Let never man,*
*For ſake of lucre, ſin againſt his ſoul.*
*Eternal juſtice is in this moſt juſt."*

HOME.

SENSATIONS of pleaſure oft-times produce a train of reflections that bring with them the recollection of paſt ſcenes of happineſs, and preſent to us former objects in which our very ſoul appeared entwined in one common exiſtence, and the parting of which ſeems almoſt to ſeparate ourſelves.

So it was with the baron Sampiéno, at the ſight of lady Caroline.—He felt that enthuſiaſtic glow of rapture which ſwells the veins of a parent at the recovery of a long-loſt and beloved child: but reflection ſoon whiſpered that ſhe was neither that beloved daughter nor wife, whoſe figure ſtill floated in his brain.—Every feature, every look of each of them, ſhone forth in the beautiful repreſentative he had ſeen; and the idea of what they were, followed, and called

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up thoſe trivial ſcenes of endearment, which opened wounds that for a time had been healed by the balm of religious frenzy.

Immediately on his return home, he apologized to Alfred and Matilda, hurried to his chamber, and gave vent to thoſe paſſions he had ſtruggled to conceal.—The baron was poſſeſſed of a degree of fortitude by no means inconſiderable: he had courage and reſolution,—a refined education and underſtanding,—and a noble heart. —Yet there was a conſtitutional weakneſs, a ſomething in his diſpoſition, which, by the generality of mankind, might be called a womaniſh defect,—but, by others, would be looked upon as one of the excellencies of human nature.—The regret, however, for the loſs of his wife and daughter, did not leſſen the tie which drew him towards his grand-child: he ſuffered that which can only be conceived by a perſon in a ſimilar ſituation.

Alfred and his ſiſter met him the next morning at breakfaſt.—His countenance was ſerene, yet melancholy:—ſtill, however, they could perceive he anticipated the pleaſure of claſping lady Caroline to his heart, and once more embracing his much beloved ſon-in-law.

Alfred, though he might wiſh to accompany him, immediately refuſed the invitation; but the baron requeſted that Matilda would go with him.

At rather an early hour, they were introduced by madame Boſivi's ſervant to the breakfaſt-room, in which were ſeated that lady, lord Albourne, and his daughter.——Lady Caroline was at her harp, and his lordſhip liſtening to her harmony, while he took his chocolate.——All three roſe at the entrance of the viſitors, and madame Boſivi introduced the baron as the gentleman whom ſhe had mentioned to his lordſhip the night before.

Lord Albourne bowed; and, though he ſeemed rather ſtruck with the countenance, did not recogniſe the perſon:——he, however, advanced, and took the hand of Matilda.

"Believe me, miſs Maſerini," ſaid he, "however unexpected this viſit may be, the pleaſure I receive from it is unlimited; and I am ſure Caroline will join with me in thanks for the honour you confer on us."

Matilda bowed, and returned a ſuitable anſwer to this polite compliment.

During a ſhort interval, the baron's eyes were fixed, firſt on lord Albourne, and then on his daughter; while madame Boſivi, who was the moſt diſengaged of the party, thought ſhe could perceive a likeneſs between the picture of the late lady Albourne that hung over the fire-place, and the ſtranger before her.

Each being ſeated, lord Albourne, turning to the baron, requeſted to know his buſineſs; and while this requeſt was made, as he more earneſtly obſerved

obſerved the features of the perſon to whom he was ſpeaking, they ſeemed to make ſome impreſſion on his memory; and a ſomething appeared to croſs his mind, that occaſioned conſiderable emotion.

The baron heſitated:——a kind of ſympathy worked upon both; and, while Matilda trembled with anxiety, lady Caroline and madame Boſivi looked at each other with the utmoſt ſurpriſe.—— The baron at length ſpoke

"I will not ſo ſuch wrong your lordſhip, as even to ſuppoſe you have forgot ſome ſcenes at an early period of life; the tendency, and I may ſay, happineſs of which have, no doubt, ſtamped on your recollection ſome objects to whom you were then nearly allied, and in whoſe fortune you were much intereſted:——but I am far from being ſurpriſed that my face does not call theſe circumſtances to your recollection, when I conſider the alteration that time and miſery have made in my perſon."

Lord Albourne heard no more:——he claſped the offered hand of the baron with an ardour that bordered on madneſs; and, as he lifted his eyes towards heaven, he heaved a heart-felt ſigh, which, in ſome degree, relieved the fullneſs of his ſoul.

Lady Caroline and madame Boſivi ſtill remained ſilent ſpectators of this affecting ſcene; though, with Matilda, they were rather alarmed at the ſituation of his lordſhip.

The baron received lord Albourne in his arms with a pleaſure that partook of paternal love.——

They were both unable to ſpeak:——his lordſhip took the hand of his daughter, and preſented her to her grandfather.——Another affecting ſcene now took place, and the baron almoſt ſuppoſed he claſped the figure of his Lucretia.

After ſome time, he gave them a brief account of his life ſince that period which he termed the criſis of his misfortunes,——his parting with his daughter.

In the courſe of this relation he oft-times had occaſion to mention Alfred, at whoſe name his lordſhip looked reſerved, and lady Caroline with anxiety.

Though lord Albourne found him ſo much prejudiced in his favour, he could not forget events he had been witneſs to, which left behind them traits very injurious to his general character.—— In the courſe of their converſation, they found that his lordſhip had never received any letter from the baron; but had for anſwer to inquiries which he ſent to Italy, that he was no more; nor could he ever gain any further information.— To procure, however, ſome account of his father-in-law, was one reaſon, though known only to himſelf, that induced him to lengthen his journey into Italy; but on his arrival there, finding his health worſe, he left it rather precipitately.——During the ſhort ſtay he made, he uſed every means in his power to find out ſome one who was acquainted with affairs relative to the death of the baron: but all proved

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ineffectual; for he understood that he left his villa suddenly, and settled in France, where he died.——His lordship now gave up every thought of searching any further, and himself departed for Paris.

As a minute investigation concerning Alfred's conduct could not very well be entered into before a third person, the baron agreed to lord Albourne's invitation to sup that evening with him; and, after many congratulations on both sides, they parted,——not however, without a promise from Matilda, to spend the next day with them.

Alfred was informed of the proceedings of this visit, and was somewhat surprised and hurt at lord Albourne's doubts respecting his character being so difficult to be obliterated;——but a moment's reflection soon ended his astonishment; he knew his lordship had more than once seen him deeply engaged in play with men notoriously known as professed gamblers, and in every respect a disgrace to society.——The little pique he had at first conceived, now vanished, and he admired that particularity he had before condemned.——The baron attended his lordship at an early hour; while Alfred and his sister spent the evening among a private party of friends.

The baron, on his return, mentioned that he had removed every objection lord Albourne had entertained against Alfred Maserini, and that he had brought him an invitation to accompany Matilda and herself the next day, to dine with his lordship.

lordſhip.——With heart-felt joy he returned the old gentleman a thouſand thanks, who now declared he muſt ſhift for himſelf, relative to any other wiſh he had to gratify through the reconciſiation.

The next day Alfred had the felicity to be received with the cordiality of ſincere friendſhip by lord Albourne, the utmoſt politeneſs by madame Boſivi, and in a manner that anſwered his moſt ſanguine expectations by lady Caroline.

They parted at rather a late hour, with an appointment from lord Albourne, madame Boſivi, and lady Caroline, to ſpend the next day but one with the baron, and, as he was pleaſed to term them, his adopted children.——Alfred obtained permiſſion to call at madame Boſivi's the next morning, to inquire after their health, and, as lord Albourne laughingly added, to ſigh away an hour with Caroline.

They found, on their return home, Henry Peviquil's card, which mentioned he ſhould call on them the next day.——Tireſome as his company might be to them, common politeneſs dictated they ſhould receive him.——At a late hour, the figure of the once elegant and handſome Henry Peviquil knocked at their door, worn out in conſtitution, though, according to years, hardly in the prime of life.——He was only the ſhadow of what he formerly was; and his appearance, in point of dreſs, indicated that his pecuniary circumſtances were by no means affluent; yet ſtill he was gay to a folly, and chearful almoſt to madneſs:

madneſs:——in ſhort, he was a profeſſed gambler, and a noted debauchee; accounted an Engliſhman of the firſt *ton* in France, and a man of the firſt taſte and faſhion in his own country; he was the very quinteſſence of high life in London, and allowed at Paris to be poſſeſſed of that *je ne ſai quoi*, which ſtamped on him the real character of a *fine gentleman*.——Among the generality of the ladies of rank of both nations, he was adored as a man of gallantry; nor were their ideas wrong: a man of gallantry he certainly was; for, to his great honour, he had ſeduced more women, and afterwards forſaken them, than one half of his ſex; and, in theſe circumſtances, the *etiquette* of both kingdoms encouraged his noble and ſpirited conduct.

The poor innocent girl whom his curſed arts had taught to love him, entangled like the defenceleſs fly in the web of a ſpider, falls a ſacrifice to the enſnarer.——Mark the reſult of his enterpriſe:——the miſerable object finds herſelf betrayed by the man whom her guiltleſs heart taught her to ſuppoſe as generous as he was inſinuating; the *delicacy* of *virtuous women* forces them to diſcard the child of affliction, and victim of unmanly cruelty; while the author of her diſgrace receives double ſplendour from the deed becoming public, and is cheriſhed by that ſociety, and nouriſhed by thoſe comforts, from which he has hurled her for ever.——Shameful prejudice!—though a national cuſtom,

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it is a diſgrace to its followers, and ſtands the criterion of a narrow mind, and unfeeling ſoul.

Henry Peviquil, as was before mentioned in the former part of this little hiſtory, did not, when he found Matilda forſaken by her friends (at leaſt by thoſe who ſhould have proved themſelves ſuch), behave to her in a manner altogether conſiſtent with rectitude or politeneſs; and his manners at laſt became rude and inſulting.——He once had the audacity to make propoſals, which gave her the moſt ſerious alarms while ſhe remained in his power.——The ſcene was entirely changed; the diſtreſſed orphan of the Maſerini family, deſpiſed by his mother, contemptuouſly treated by his ſiſter, forgot by his father, and inſulted by himſelf, was now poſſeſſed or in every reſpect likely to be poſſeſſed of rank, fortune, and friends.—Even the aſſurance of Henry Peviquil, now quite ſober, could not overcome a little embarraſſment as he addreſſed them; he, however, ſoon got the better of this vulgar failing.

For fear, however, that the ſpirit or honour of this accompliſhed gentleman ſhould be called in queſtion for thus ſeeking to recommence an acquaintance he formerly diſdained, and with perſons who received his offers of friendſhip with that coolneſs which could not prompt him to go on with the purſuit, it will be neceſſary to inform the reader that he had intereſt in view:——beſides gratifying his pride, to claſs them among other perſons of diſtinction whom he could familiarly

miliarly nod at in public places of entertainment, or chat with at the rout of a woman of faſhion, he was actuated by another motive, more powerful by far; he knew Alfred had loved play; he was himſelf a perfect maſter of the art, and was well acquainted with the powerful infatuation that encircles the votaries to that way of deſtruction; therefore, whatever he might have heard relative to his having entirely given up the gaming-table, he conceived to be merely fabulous, and only raiſed either to introduce him to lord Albourne's eſteem, or to be of ſervice in the intended trial.——Now Henry Peviquil knew, if he could but once more draw him among thoſe ſcenes he had formerly frequented, he would prove a very fit perſon to become a dupe to his artifices; and this was the more to be deſired, as he had juſt entered into a party ſomething ſimiliar to that in which D'Ollifont had been engaged, and into which the baron Sampieno was introduced at Genoa.

With theſe very honourable determinations, he waited on his diſtant relations; but he had the mortification to obſerve that all the advances he made were received with mere civility, and that there appeared very little hopes of Alfred ever again attempting the faro table.

With great coolneſs they parted. and Henry Peviquil ſatisfied himſelf with declaring, at all the faſhionable parties, that the whole trio, meaning the baron, Alfred, and his ſiſter, were quite *outré*; and informing his new collegues, whom he

he had fed with hopes of bringing a new pigeon to exert their abilities on, that he found the fellow void of all ſpirit, and queſtioned if he had integrity enough to pay a *debt of honour* before a *tradeſman's bill.*

CHAP.

## CHAP. XVIII.

MATILDA now propoſed a viſit which ſhe had in contemplation ever ſince their arrival in France, which was to the mother of Agnes.——She lived ſome diſtance from Paris.——Accordingly the fair fugitive and herſelf ſet off the next day, attended by one ſervant; while the baron and Alfred were engaged to dine with lord Albourne.——They that morning received a letter from lord Milverne, which mentioned his having made every inquiry relative to his lordſhip and lady Caroline, but that all his endeavours proved uſeleſs.

Alfred had, however, diſpatched a letter to inform him of their unexpected diſcovery, and his own happineſs; which he ſuppoſed would have come to his hands before the date of his from England.

Agnes and Matilda purſued their journey, and, after a day's quick travelling, found themſelves at the place of their deſtination.——The heart of the former throbbed with various emotions:—love, fear, joy, and doubt, alternately poſſeſſed her boſom; while the effects might clearly be perceived in her countenance.—The ſervant knocked at the door, and a young girl, whom Agnes did

did not know, opened it.—She inſtantly exclaimed, "My mother is dead!"

Unable to proceed further, ſhe nearly fainted.—Matilda, with as much compoſure as ſhe could aſſume, aſked if the perſon who inhabited that cottage ſome months paſt, was living?

The girl anſwered, "Yes, and within."

Agnes claſped her hands in ecſtaſy.—Matilda firſt alighted, and entered.—A middle-aged woman was ſeated knitting: ſhe aroſe at the entrance of the ſtranger, and ſeemed rather confuſed.

"You had," ſaid Matilda, "a daughter?"

She changed colour, and could hardly articulate—"Yes."

"And you loſt her?"

She with ſtill greater difficulty repeated the ſame anſwer.

The converſation proceeded no further:—Agnes ruſhed into the room, and was inſtantly in the arms of her mother.

Tears relieved them both, and the latter then requeſted to know by what act of providence ſhe was thus bleſſed beyond expreſſion.—Matilda related to her moſt of the circumſtances that had happened to her daughter ſince ſhe left the cottage, and concluded with an enquiry after M. Le Selet.

The queſtion confuſed her greatly; and, after a few moments, ſhe replied, ſhe had ſeen him but once ſince her daughter left her; but had heard he was dead.

Matilda

Matida now turned the diſcourſe relative to her behaviour to that gentleman and her child.—Her words carried in them a ſevere rebuke to the imprudent mother, who appeared to be perfectly convinced of her error; and declared ſhe had not enjoyed one moment of felicity ſince her daughter's elopement,—torn as ſhe was with remorſe for her cruel conduct towards her.

Oliver, they underſtood, was well, and lived only for Agnes.——He was ſent for; and their meeting can only be conceived—not deſcribed.—Matilda experienced the moſt heart-felt pleaſure in ſettling every point with the old lady relative to their marriage, and rewarding this faithful and truly innocent girl with the beſt gift ſhe could beſtow on her, a good huſband.——She gave Oliver an invitation to return, with Agnes, to Paris (who was to ſtay with her mother a few days), when they ſhould be united, and he receive with his bride a portion ſufficient to put them into a way of life that with induſtry would procure them every neceſſary and comfort they could wiſh to poſſeſs.

Matilda remained at the cottage that night; the next day, returned alone, and joined Alfred and the baron at madame Boſivi's, in the evening, where they were engaged to ſupper.—Here ſhe was informed that it had been reported the whole day that D'Ollifont was no more:—it was not, however, by any means confirmed.

On their entering their lodgings, they were told by the ſervant that a ſtrange gentleman had called,

called, who particularly wiſhed to ſee Mr. Maſerini, or the baron.—In vain they endeavoured to imagine who it could be; their efforts were fruitleſs, and they retired unſatisfied.

They had juſt ſat down to breakfaſt the next morning, when they were informed the ſame gentleman requeſted to be admitted.—He was accordingly introduced; but he was entirely unknown to them all.——His dreſs was plain; yet there was much of the gentleman in his manner, and he ſeemed to be in the decline of life.—— They politely aſked to know his buſineſs.

"My buſineſs," he anſwered, "is rather of a ſtrange nature; and the character I come under, will, I doubt, give you no very good opinion of my honour or integrity."

Alfred, Matilda, and the baron, were aſtoniſhed.

"I am," continued the viſitor, "the ſteward of count D'Ollifont."

They were ſtill more ſurpriſed.

"I perceive your countenances change," ſaid he. "But ſuſpend your exclamations for a moment, while I inform you, not now of the murderer or uſurper of another's right, but the dying guilty wretch, who waits with all the horrors of a hell before him, to receive the awful change that plunges him into eternity."

They were in ſome degree affected, and he was requeſted to be ſeated.

"Alas!" he cried, "I am not without my ſhare of miſery, which fell on all that came with-

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in his deſtroying power.—My name is calumniated for ever:—by the multitude I am called the confidant of a fiend whom I deteſt as much as they, but whoſe infernal ſnares beguiled my unſuſpecting ſoul, and hurled me to deſtruction.—Yet I now come to fulfil his laſt requeſt.——Before his eyes are cloſed for ever, he wiſhes to behold, what I ſhould ſuppoſe would blaſt his very ſight,—the baron Sampieno, Mr. Maſerini, and his ſiſter."

It is impoſſible to conceive the amazement of all three.

"The count," he continued, "four days ago made his will, in which he reſigns all right to the eſtates of his late uncle; and, in ſome degree, to make what poor reparation is in his power, he has bequeathed the whole of his fortune, except ſome ſmall annuities in charity, to be equally divided between the baron and the two ſurviving heirs of the Maſerini family.——The amount of this property is nearly ſixty thouſand pounds.——No ſcruples need prevent your receiving it, ſince it has not been accumulated by the frauds he has been guilty of, but by the favour he was once in at the court of France."

He begged to know their determination; for, if they conſented to the wiſhes of the dying man, he would himſelf conduct them at any hour of the day they choſe to appoint.——It required ſome little time to reſolve; but at length compaſſion for the ſufferings of the criminal D'Ollifont overcame every other argument againſt the viſit, and they fixed three o'clock that day.

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The ſteward departed, and promiſed to be with them at that hour.

They conſidered that at all events there could be no danger whatever in this requeſt, as officers of juſtice reſided in the houſe.—They, however, determined to take two of their own ſervants.——The perſon whom they had juſt ſeen, was, they had no doubt, Rabourn, whom they had heard lord Milverne mention in no very favourable manner; but they had found, ſince their reſidence in Paris, that his character had been cleared by D'Ollifont's own confeſſion.

At three o'clock Rabourn arrived, and all four ſet off in the baron's carriage, attended by two men, to the count's manſion.——Their ride was ſhort, as he lived no great diſtance from their own reſidence.——During the time, however, they underſtood by the ſteward that he was much worſe than in the fore part of the day, and that he left him in ſtrong convulſions; he therefore conceived (as the ſight of him might be too great a ſhock to Miſs Maſerini's feelings) that ſhe had better not enter his chamber, unleſs he ſhould ſo far recover as to mention again a wiſh to ſee her.—This was ſettled, and they preſently ſtopped at the houſe.

They were conducted through a ſuperb hall into an elegant apartment:——the ſervants were deſired to follow, and remained here with them, while Rabourn went into the ſick man's chamber, which was the next room.——He returned, and informed them his convulſions were gone off,

off, but he was afraid he was ſpeechleſs; though he ſeemed, however, to look as if he wiſhed to know whether they were come—Matilda begged to remain where ſhe was, unleſs he ſhould, by ſigns or words, expreſs a deſire to ſee her.

The ſteward led the way; Alfred and the baron followed, through a pair of folding doors, to an elegant bed-room, beautifully furniſhed in the richeſt taſte.—At the further end was the count's bed, of crimſon ſattin, with gold trimmings.——Two phyſicians, two nurſes, a confeſſor, and three ſervants, ſtood round,——and, at intervals, adminiſtered cordials to their patient.—The curtains were pulled on one ſide; and, extended on the bed, lay the wretched man, ſurrounded with elegance, clothed in the fineſt linen, and reclined on a mattreſs of down.——But what were the luxuries, the paltry elegancies, that ſurrounded him?—Could the ſtructure of the room,—the beauty of the furniture,—the richneſs of the canopy under which he lay,—or the downy ſoftneſs of his bed, give to him that comfort, that conſolation or fortitude, which the awful criſis required?

Alas! no; every moment did the trembling victim of guilt and ambition expect to ſee the gilded ſcene of earthly pride vaniſh into darkneſs, and that darkneſs open to him he knew not what,—but which it was hell to him only to conceive.

Alfred and the baron advanced ſlowly.—D'Ollifont's eyes turned upon them:—a kind of cold

ſhivering

ſhivering ſeized him; and drops of perſpiration appeared on his forehead, which one of the nurſes dried off with a muſlin handkerchief.

During the courſe of his diabolical exiſtence, many were the ſighs he had wrung from the widow, the fatherleſs, and the unprotected; yet the damp muſlin that received theſe guilty drops of horror and remorſe of conſcience, might be ſaid in ſome meaſure to atone for the innocent tears drawn from female diſtreſs.——Who could tell his pangs, the inward workings of his ſoul?——Who could tell the convulſive terror that ſhook every limb?—Who could tell his ſecret thoughts that blaſted every hope?

His ſenſes failed him the moment the viſitors appeared.—His convulſions returned with double force, and a fourth ſervant was obliged to be called in, to aſſiſt the others in holding him.—He raved on the names of Maſerini and Sampieno; then, ſpent with exertion, bit his under lip with ſuch violence that blood flowed abundantly from his mouth.

His ravings again returned.——By a ſudden ſnatch he diſengaged himſelf from hold; and, with a kind of exultation in his face, which was now partly black, he tore a large root of hair from his head; then, with a ſtifled laugh, fell lifeleſs on the pillow.

Such was the end of the moſt tyrannical, cruel, and unexampled villain, a diſgrace to the world,—a ſcourge to his fellow-creatures,—and a curſe to himſelf.—Ambition was the bait that beguiled him:

him: and that ambition did but mock him, when he lay a disfigured corpse under the hangings of an elegant canopy.

Alfred, the baron, and Rabourn, withdrew to the next apartment, all greatly shocked.——They were informed that Matilda was in one of the lower rooms; the cries of the dying D'Ollifont were too much for her.

The news of the count's death was no sooner told than the whole house was in considerable confusion, and the baron requested to know who was to have the management of his affairs.——The steward informed them, the will mentioned it should be jointly executed by Mr. Maserini and himself.——He assured them every thing was left in so exact a manner that it would occasion them very little trouble.—The count, before their arrival, had confessed every circumstance relative to the murders, which would, without any trial, put them at once into possession of their right.

Rabourn produced the will, and it contained every thing he had mentioned.——After having invested him with power to give all necessary orders relative to the funeral and other matters, they departed to their lodgings.

The disagreeable scene they had just witnessed, was repaid by the sight of lord Milverne, who received Alfred's letter the very day he sent off his own, and followed himself almost immediately.

He congratulated them on the fortunate conclusion of their affairs, though he declared he

was malicious enough to wiſh theſe events had happened after his alliance with Matilda, that he might have been able to have proved to the world the diſintereſtedneſs of his love.

That evening he accompanied them to madame Boſivi's.—Lord Albourne received him as an old friend,—lady Caroline, as an acquaintance whom ſhe had much eſteem for, and madame Boſivi, with the utmoſt politeneſs.

It is impoſſible to conceive a more happy party than the perſons who then ſat down to ſupper.—The recollection of their paſt misfortunes endeared to them their preſent felicity; and they all agreed that a life tinctured with adverſity receives that glow of happineſs, which an inſipid medium never produces.

## CHAP. XIX.

*———Evening comes at laſt, ſerene and mild:*
*When after the long vernal day of life,*
*Enamour'd more, as more remembrance ſwells*
*With many a proof of recollected love,*
*Together down they ſink in ſocial ſleep;*
*Together freed, their gentle ſpirits fly*
*To ſcenes where love and bliſs immortal reign.*

THOMSON.

*———Laſt ſcene of all,*
*That ends this ſtrange eventful hiſtory.*

SHAKESPEARE.

THAT virtue and vice are their own rewards, is a proverb generally allowed; it is certainly founded on truth and exemplified in almoſt every occurrence of life.

It requires but little obſervation, to perceive that the comforts, even the ſuperfluities of the world, procured by means not conſiſtent with the moral government of mankind, loſe the chief part of thoſe allurements which tempted the poſſeſſor to gain them by illicit tranſactions.—The man who partakes of a ſcanty hard-earned meal by his own

induſtry, enjoys more than he who eats of the ſumptuous repaſt, at the expenſe of a fellow-creature's miſery and oppreſſion.

This poſition was proved in D'Ollifont, and the principal ſufferers by his villany, the baron, Alfred, and his ſiſter:—by accounts they now heard from Rabourn, the count underwent far more than they, though all three under the ſevereſt laſh of adverſity: for he was tortured by a guilty conſcience, and haunted by phantoms of a diſturbed and diſordered brain.

His funeral was conducted by the ſteward, who in the will was left a ſmall but decent competency; and to it, Alfred, his ſiſter, and the baron, added a conſiderable ſum.—The legacies were many of them overpaid, by their joint conſent, to thoſe who were in want of it. In a very ſhort time all the affairs were properly ſettled, and the children of the Maſerini family became poſſeſſed of all their right, by a ſhort though regular proceſs in law.—Agnes and Oliver returned at the time appointed; the latter was introduced to the baron, and Alfred (now Count Maſerini), and received from them no inconſiderable marks of favour.

Matilda conceived it would be proper Agnes's mother ſhould be ſent for, to be preſent at her daughter's marriage, which was conſummated about a fortnight after their arrival at Paris.—She returned the count and his ſiſter a thouſand thanks, and received from both a handſome preſent.—

ſent.—It was now determined, Oliver and his wife ſhould ſet off for Graſville Abbey.—Count Maſerini intended to have it put in repair, and fixed upon him as a proper perſon to ſuperintend them, as he had been originally brought up in that line; for Leonard, who was ſtill there, was too much advanced in years to take the care upon himſelf.—It was, however, left entirely to their own inclination, and they both gladly accepted the offer.

It was about a week after their departure, when the count Maſerini and lady Caroline Albourne, lord Milverne and Matilda, were on one day united. Lord Albourne and the baron ſighed at the altar, and could hardly ſtifle a tear, the mixture of acute ſorrow and extreme pleaſure; half of it might be ſaid to ariſe at the recollection of the time when they were together at a ſimilar ceremony; the former as the enraptured bridegoom, the latter as the doating parent: the other half was occaſioned by their preſent felicity, though under different characters; the bridegroom transformed to the parent, and the parent to the ſtill further title of grandfather, viewing in the child of his departed daughter, every virtue, every female accompliſhment, he thought he had for ever loſt, when deprived of the affectionate tie of parental tenderneſs.

Both the count and lord Milverne now ſaw themſelves poſſeſſed of every happineſs they could even form a wiſh to have procured; this

thought, as it croſſed the mind of the former, by a train of ideas incident to it, brought to his imagination that moment, when, with the ſword of his departed father, he was going to put an end to his exiſtence in a fit of phrenzy and deſpair.—He bluſhed at the recollection of an event which he now almoſt ſhuddered to think of; it held forth to him a ſtriking leſſon againſt a want of fortitude, and a raſh unmanly precipitation.

They remained at Paris but a week after the marriage, and then ſet off for England, as it was their intention to ſpend in London the remainder of the winter ſeaſon (which was now juſt commenced), return to France about June, and the latter end of the year proceed to Graſville Abbey, which would by that time be ready for their reception.

Their arrival in this metropolis was immediately known in the faſhionable world; and one of the firſt parties that received the general whiſper, was that of lady Peviquil.—They had ſlept in their houſe in Berkley-ſquare but one night, when the next morning their breakfaſt table was covered with cards of invitation and congratulations from different quarters, and among them one from ſir Anthony and his lady.

Moſt of the perſons whoſe names they mentioned, called in the courſe of the morning, and formed a complete groupe, or levee;

vee; the chief part of which had ſhunned them with adverſe eyes in the chilling part of their misfortunes, but who now courted their acquaintance with a ſycophantic earneſtneſs, when they found them encircled by the warm rays of proſperity and affluence.——All theſe were received with a very cool and diſtant civility, and among them was lady Peviquil, who, with the true deceitful ſimper of a courtier, deſcended from an elegant equipage, and forcing her way through a crowd of the *great world* to the upper end of the drawing-room, in the moſt whining tone of tenderneſs, declared himſelf "happy beyond expreſſion at ſeeing them return to England."—Her compliments were received as thoſe of a perſon whom they had never before ſeen; and her ladyſhip had the mortification to return with her pride extremely hurt at the reception ſhe received.

Having ſpent the allotted time in London with conſiderable happineſs and felicity, their time equally divided among ſelect friends and public places of amuſement,——they returned to Paris, and the hours floated away here in the ſame round of enjoyment. They ſeveral times ſaw both Henry Peviquil and his ſiſter; the former every day became more low and depraved; the latter, forſaken by the man whom ſhe eloped with from her father's houſe, was now the *chère amie* of an Italian marquis, whoſe character by no means added luſtre to his title.

At

At their return to Graſville Abbey, they found all the repairs finiſhed entirely to their liking; and though the ſtructure was by no means robbed of its gothic elegance in the external part, yet it was made far more convenient and comfortable in the internal: the chapel was handſomely fitted up, and a tomb erected to the memory of their father, mother, and aunt.——They found the good old Leonard in perfect health; and his happineſs at ſeeing them was extreme.

The count received a promiſe from lord Milverne and his ſiſter, that they would ſpend three months in every year with them at the abbey.—It was ſettled the baron and lord Albourne ſhould do the ſame; Paris agreed with them both far better than Italy; and they determined to live together the remainder of their lives.

The manſion of D'Ollifont was fixed on for their habitation; and madame Boſivi conſented to take the care of their houſehold upon herſelf.——No great diſtance from it lord Milverne bought an elegant chateau, which both himſelf and Matilda determined to make their general reſidence; though his lordſhip made her promiſe to ſpend ſome little time every two years in England.

Both lord Milverne and the count had the felicity, about twelve months after their marriage, to claſp to their boſoms, under the tender title of father, a blooming infant; the former a girl, the latter a boy:—the families were ſeldom divided; for, when lord Milverne and his lady, with

with the baron and lord Albourne, had ſpent the allotted time with the count, both he and the counteſs, after a very ſhort interval, returned the viſit at Paris.

Agnes and Oliver, as ſoon as the repairs were entirely finiſhed at Graſville Abbey, returned to lord and lady Milverne at Paris; the latter was made ſteward and principal overſeer of the chateau, while his wife was the favourite and friendly attendant of Matilda.

Leonard remained at Graſville Abbey; and being too much advanced in years to take upon himſelf the office of ſuperintendant, lived in it with a ſervant to attend him, received a handſome income from the count, and an annual preſent from lady Milverne.

The principal perſons of this little hiſtory enjoyed their preſent happineſs, by a recollection of former ſcenes of adverſity, which taught them to feel for the unfortunate, and at the ſame time gave them the higheſt gratification, by being enabled to alleviate their diſtreſſes.

Sir Anthony and lady Peviquil continued their round of faſhionable folly, till age impeded their courſe, and caſt an inſipidity on thoſe ſcenes which had conſtituted the chief pleaſure of their lives.——No relief opened itſelf to their view;—diſſipation had been their whole ſtudy; and when that failed, their exiſtence became a burden.

Void of all fortitude, diſguiſed with each other, and the world in general, they ſunk into their grave

grave much about the ſame time, and with the ſame horrors before them; leaving behind but juſt property enough to pay their debts, and bury them in the pompous manner they had ordered.

Henry Peviquil continued his run of gambling in France for near four years, when he became ſo notorious in that country, as to be obliged to quit it for England.——From his father, however, he could get no aſſiſtance; and, after a period of eight years, during which time he ſubſiſted by common ſwindling, he was taken up for a highway robbery, received ſentence of death, but took the king's mercy by accepting tranſportation,—and died on the voyage.

His ſiſter lived with the Italian marquis before mentioned, for about two years; when ſhe eloped with his valet de chambre into Switzerland, where he uſed her exceedingly ill; and for an attempt on his life, ſhe was obliged to fly to a remote part of the country; was ſuddenly taken ill and died in her twenty-eighth year.

Oliver and Agnes led a life of the utmoſt ſerenity and comfort,——they had ſeveral children, which proved a comfort to their increaſing years, ——and all turned out valuable members of ſociety.

The good old Leonard enjoyed but a few years of felicity; he however lived to ſpend ſome time with every bleſſing he could wiſh, and to ſee all thoſe ſcenes realiſed, that his moſt ſanguine ideas could have formed.

Lord

Lord Albourne died about twelve years after his daughter's marriage; the baron felt moſt ſeverely his loſs; in ſhort, this might be ſaid to be the firſt event that occaſioned any conſiderable damp on the happineſs of the two families.—— The chief part of his lordſhip's fortune was left to his daughter, and a conſiderable legacy to lord and lady Milverne.

The baron Sampieno, after lord Albourne's death, reſided with lord Milverne, as madame Boſivi died of an apoplexy a few months before his lordſhip. He lived to a very advanced age, bleſſed with years of happineſs, that might be ſaid in a great meaſure to repay him for former misfortunes.——He left the whole of his fortune between the count and lord Milverne.

The count and counteſs of Maſerini, with lord and lady Milverne, enjoyed a long ſeries of happineſs and felicity. They had each ſeveral children, and lived to ſee them prove an ornament to their rank, and the community at large. Time heightened their bleſſings, and their declining years were like a ſetting ſun, which gathers freſh ſplendour, as it gradually vaniſhes from our ſight.

*FINIS.*

JUL